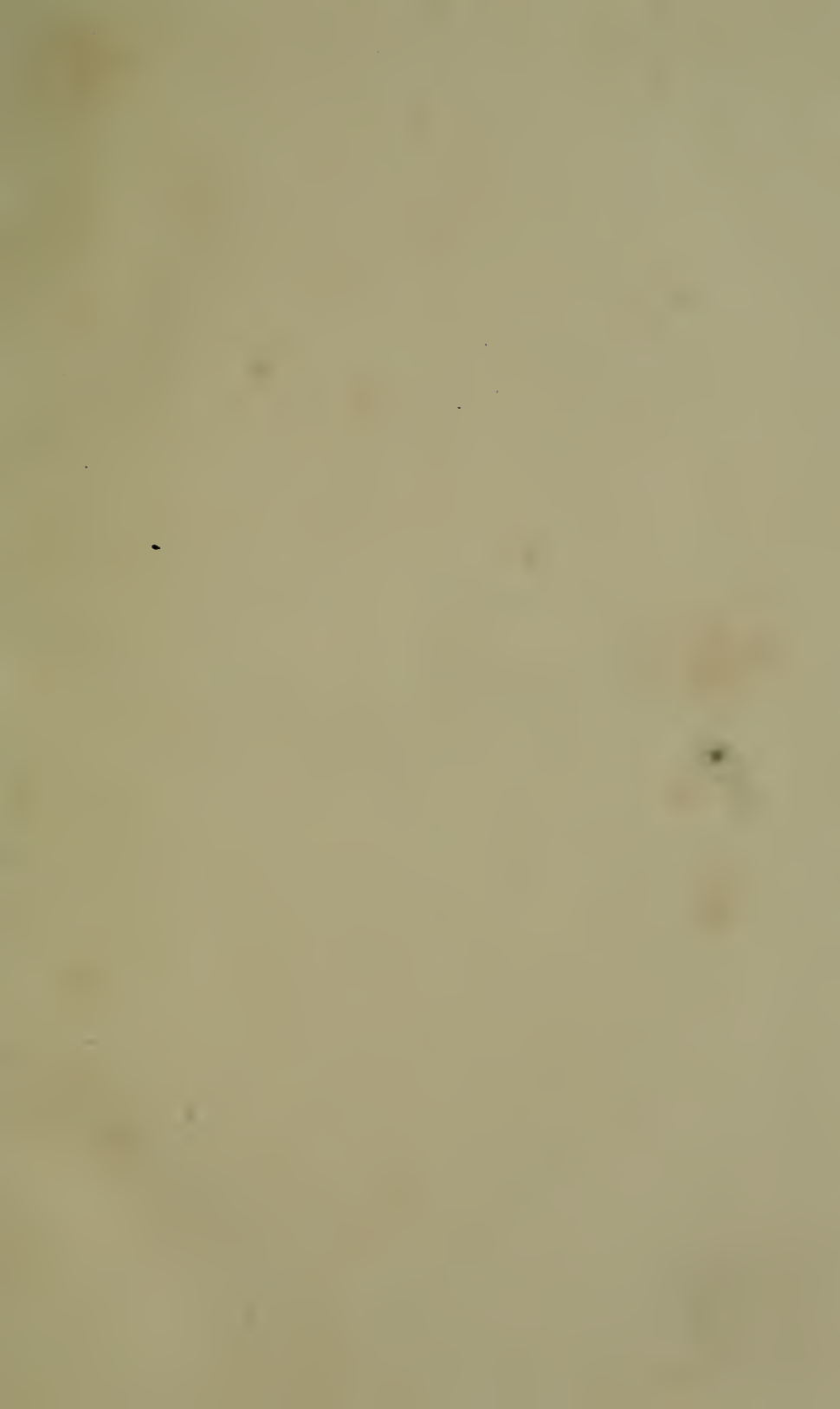


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A LIFE'S HAZARD;
OR,
THE OUTLAW OF WENTWORTH WASTE.

VOL. I.



A LIFE'S HAZARD;

OR,

THE OUTLAW OF WENTWORTH WASTE.

BY HENRY ESMOND.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

London:

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A LIFE'S HAZARD;

OR,

THE OUTLAW OF WENTWORTH WASTE.

CHAPTER I.

IN the year 18— there dwelt in Swords (which lies north of Dublin) a man of whom the antiquated villagers surmised much but knew little.

The subject of all this ambiguous thought was one of fine symmetrical proportions, broad-shouldered and unconstrained in gait, while his bronzed, long-bearded face—despite its plaintive expression—wore an easy appearance of benevolent confidence that never comes by accident. His age was thirty-three years, but he looked considerably older.

Gen Res Roy 29 Aug 53 Sent to 31, 1880
Burdula 12 Oct. 53

Letters for Harcourt Russell, Esq., were punctually called for every morning, and deferentially tendered to him by the comely wife of the local postmaster ; other than which there was no clue to the “ strange gentleman,” as he was usually called.

Excellence of quality was unmistakable in his carriage and appearance ; indeed, it was this conscious superiority that occasioned so much wonder as to who he was. Alone, unthought-of and unattended, he presented himself to the widow O'Rourke late one summer evening.

“ I wish to occupy your rooms ” were almost his only words as he crossed the threshold, though the worthy estimable relict never could understand how he knew she had apartments to let.

The year 18— was fast drawing to a close—autumn being already at hand.

This morning, however, was unusually fine. As the sun rose high in its vaulted zenith, the sluggish mists crept from

their black recesses to be ruthlessly dispelled, while the feathered choristers distended their reedy throats and carolled their full notes of gladness. With the same preoccupied look the stranger presented himself as usual at the little post-office and received the customary letters for Harcourt Russell, Esq.

Politely returning the meek salutation of the attentive official, he was in the act of placing these letters in his pocket, when the superscription on one caught his eye, and uttering an involuntary exclamation, he leaned heavily against the counter.

The sympathetic face of the postmistress at once showed actual concern as, almost tenderly, she said, "Indade, I hope yer honour's not ill?" With admirable fortitude he repressed every trace of agitation almost instantly, and in the same subdued manner softly replied, "Thank you, my illness is the growth of years, which time and justice alone can cure." Long was

that touching reply remembered by his simple-minded auditor, who, though unable to realize the significance of his words, yet did not doubt their sincerity.

Towards the evening of this day, which was damp and foggy, a man, heavily muffled and disguised, with measured steps cautiously made his way towards Kilmainham, one of the extreme points of the boundary of the city of Dublin. Continuing his route by the Phoenix Park, he turned to the left, swiftly crossed the road and took a copious draught from St. John's Well. "Many years ago," he ejaculated, "I stood on this hallowed place, but, alas ! how changed am I now ; then I was happy in the pursuit of life's dream—ay, joyous in its following as the bird of passage pursues its ærial flight across the measureless wave. I too have crossed the wave, and yet again I am here to prove life's treasures lost, lost ! Oh, let me hide the damning thought beyond recalling, and on to my destiny !" Hastily resuming

his resolute walk and manner, he passed by Bully's Acre, where sleeps Ireland's foremost son, Brian Boru. The path now became winding and rugged, not a soul was visible, nor were the abodes of man to be met with. Fearlessly, however, he pressed on, at length relaxing his pace as he neared Richmond Cemetery, and though the night was dark and dismal he seemed heedless of all that was passing around, but could any one have peered into those dilated eyes they would have read resolution and energy therein that would not brook defeat. Silently he stood and listened, reclining against the wall of the churchyard. The faint, low simulation of a hoot escaped his lips, when, almost immediately, a rope ladder was cast over the wall, and rapidly ascending it he disappeared on the other side.

CHAPTER II.

WHILE the events narrated in the preceding chapter were being enacted, a woman watched from her eyrie height on the Hill of Howth across the opaque waters of the magnificent bay of Dublin.

With her face closely pressed against the moist vapour-clad window, she sedulously counted the flight of time, now going into the outer passage to listen, and again returning to her observatory to meditate on the strange continued absence of her expected visitor. Dressed in a robe of deep mourning, her face partook of its sombre hue, and looked stony white in the gloomy, clouded chamber.

She was tall, erect—nay, almost rigid in

appearance and movements, but a pensive beam shot from out those lustrous eyes, softening the contour of that meditative face, and imparting to it a wealth of truest sympathy.

The wind swept ruthlessly by, maddening the rampant waves that broke in weird discordant sounds, and, with baffled energy, wasted themselves on the rock-bound base of her lonely dwelling.

Far off in the dim distance she watched the abrupt oscillations of the warning light-ship, as it rose and fell at the behest of the sea, and thought how many like herself had to bend and succumb to the measure of Time's tempests as they permeate and dissever the atomy sands of our too seldom joy.

In the midst of these wan memories of the past her eye was arrested by the appearance of a four-oared boat, lightly speeding towards her, and rapidly approaching. "It is odd," she thought,

“he should have chosen this perilous mode of coming, but evil counsellors lean to the strong in everything, even to that which most others dread.”

The wind being off the land, was necessarily in the teeth of the boat, and, with the back-wash, made her roll in the turbid short waves.

“Steady, lads ! pull strong ; that’s it, hold together. Now look out ; give way in the bow ; right you are ; unship oars !” were the words of the man at the helm as the oars lay slanting in their rowlocks, while the “way” on the boat was sufficient to carry her through a narrow opening in the rocks, inside of which, under the influence of the “tiller,” she speedily hove-to alongside a small improvised jetty. Leaping ashore, the late speaker went straight towards the house, looming above in the distance. Familiar with its shingly path, he speedily found himself at the door, which instantly opened.

“Is her ladyship at home?” he inquired of the old woman who presented herself.

“Arrah! where else wud she be an sich a night? Av ye call this ould barrack her home! May I——there, shure, I won’t be afther cursin’.”

Unmindful of these depreciatory remarks, the first speaker resumed:—

“Give her ladyship this letter, and say I wait her commands.”

“Av coorse ye do, an’ why not? What the divil else are ye fit for?” continuing in an undertone, as she went upstairs, “Ay, an’ ye’ll wait me commands as well.”

Her auditor smiled good-humouredly, and indulged in blithely whistling the “Groves of Blarney” whilst waiting. It was not long, however, before the querulous voice again smote his ears, from the end of the small hallway, saying,—

“Clane yer dirty feet, and be afther fol-

lowin' me upsthairs; thim's me ordhers," she emphasized, while ascending to the floor above, without waiting to see the injunction complied with.

Brushing his hair with his hands, he overtook her almost at a bound, when she suddenly barred further progress, exclaiming,—

"Aizey! Yer not much used to sthairs, bud ye'll larn manners for the first time in yer life," saying which she clutched her narrow dress with each hand, and brought it and them to an elevation, effectually keeping him on the lower step, as she rose to the alternate upper one. Reaching the flat, without any token or warning Mag roughly opened the door, and almost pushed him into the apartment, exclaiming,—

"Throth, yer ladyship! I've seen the day whin asses had manners, but here's wan as has nothin' to sphare, bad scran to thim all, crop an' nick!"

“ You need not heed what old Margaret says,” observed the lady in mourning, as she politely motioned her visitor to a chair, while the voice of the old woman reached them, evidently objurgating some one, if only herself.

The new comer nervously assumed a seat, and, looking downwards, spoke in a tone of inquiry.

“ I brought your ladyship a letter from Lord——”

Raising her hand, she firmly interrupted him, saying,—

“ Your master, sir, has sent it.”

“ I beg pardon,” he faltered.

No more was rejoined, and a pause succeeded whilst she attentively perused the paper in her hands as he looked towards the carpet.

“ Is it a very dangerous night on the water ? ” was resumed inquiringly.

“ No, your ladyship ; it is rough somewhat, but nothing much to speak of.”

“There is no great peril in venturing to Malahide?”

“Not for one with your ladyship’s determination,” he said in confident voice.

“Then I shall go,” were her quick resolved words.

“Thank your ladyship. I’ll get some wrappers and covering to make the boat comfortable.”

“Nothing, please, out of the way,” she faintly smiled, “but see that Margaret provides you and the boatmen with refreshment while I prepare for the short voyage.”

“Oh, yes ! yes, Margaret, your ladyship. I—I—in fact, we—” (he now reached the door, and hastily escaped outside to finish the sentence)—“we will easily thrive on all she’d give us.”

“Ye lie, ye baste !” was hissed into his ear by old Margaret. “Didn’t I hear every word passed ? ay, ay, an’ I know what didn’t pass” (a running commentary as

he hastily went down the stairs). “She goes o’er the wathers, bud, curse ye an’ yer employer, even thin ye shan’t hurt her!”

They had now reached the outer door, and, turning menacingly, he said,—

“Do you mean we want to drown her—to——”

“Yes, I do, ye black hypocrites, but ye shall not”—(notwithstanding his silence reading “wherefore” in his fixed eye as he departed). She raised her voice to a frenzied tone, and shouted on the night wind, “Becayze Heaven scorns the guilty an’ withers them in their sin.”

A hand was now placed on her sinuous shoulder, her mistress pleadingly saying,—

“Margaret, nay, speak not,” repressing her impatience. “In each of our lives there is one supreme hour wherein fortune hangs upon a gossamer thread, the timely severance of which is freighted with weal to our whole future. Mine is at hand, and

by that power above you have but now invoked, I shall accomplish all that is due to the honoured proud name of my lost husband, through venturing across this stormy lake; it is in me to feel, to know, it cannot be otherwise."

"Ah, Allana," faithful Mag entreated, "yer words are always thrue, but don't go to-night; layve it till daylight shines an ye ashore."

"Say no more," was replied decisively; "it would be trifling with my dearest hopes to hesitate. No! no!" she said, with a deprecating gesture, "you cannot alter my decision. Good night" (walking towards the boat), "good night; your sleep will not be long ere I return."

Before the devoted servant could reply her mistress went hurriedly down the rugged path and stood beside the boat. All being now ready, she was respectfully assisted to her seat, where, declining extraneous covering, she remained,

quietly observing the process of departure.

"It'll be a dirty noight, Jim," said an old salt; "see, the wind's comin' up, an' the toide."

"Not so much," interestedly interposed old Margaret's quondam friend, "when we've passed the chops just outside, and get the regular long swell."

"But it is a cross sea," observed the passenger, "and time presses."

"Let go the painter!" shouted the cockswain excitedly; "it must be done. Oars ready!" and the boat noiselessly moved from her anchorage.

"You will never pull through that sea," they were surprised to hear the lady say, "and," she added, "there is only one way in which you can succeed."

"Arrah! how, yer ladyship?" Jim inquired with eagerness.

"Hoist the main sheet and mizen; then with a single reach we will make Malahide,

if the wind holds as it is," was calmly answered.

"It is very dangerous to tack in this water, yer ladyship," said the cockswain.

"Tacking will not be necessary. Keep the sail free, and the helm well in hand."

Before there was time for further parley the fishermen by impulse moved to the suggested course, and the boat, deep set and lying low in the stern, drove headlong through the perturbed waves.

"She can conquer us all, anyhow," exclaimed one of the salts aloud, looking towards their 'freight.'

"And well for you it is so," was muttered by the recumbent figure of a man rising from behind a rock, where he had intently watched the embarkation, uncocking a brace of pistols, which he restored to his pockets.

CHAPTER III.

The “Darecourt Arms” is the best-known and most frequented hostelry on the main road between Dublin and Malahide. Its owner, Peter Gaffeney, was an old retainer of the Darecourt family, and having made the comely daughter of Terry Coghlan of the village smithy believe in him, they joined hands and not insignificant fortunes, amid the good wishes of all their neighbours.

Shortly after their marriage they succeeded to the ownership of the above-mentioned inn.

Mrs. Gaffeney speedily developed into an excellent mother and attentive wife,

but above all she was eager in the pursuit of business ; while her husband as he progressed in years and prosperity revealed two somewhat anomalous characteristics, namely, that he could drink more whisky and tell more lies within a given time than any man in existence.

There are certain conventional outlines which by common accord are not only expected in the well-known proportions of that civic luminary, the alderman, but the absence whereof in any Falstaffian candidate would be regarded as an anathema upon municipal grandeur ; and so with "Blatherbill," as he was commonly called : to dress well, eat well, drink well, and lie well were every-day necessities of his unthinking life.

Unthinking it was to a certainty, for he was of believers the most believing. On this evening the "Darecourt Arms" was unusually well filled, giving the excellent Mistress Gaffeney desirable opportunities

of agreeably referring to her pleasure in seeing so many familiar faces, "An' shure it warn't a thaste av throuble at all at all, to repaytethemeasures," though it brought increased coursing beads of perspiration on her heated face and proportionally filled her "till" (the key of which was always carried by Mistress Gaffeney to spare her unvaracious spouse the trouble of accounting for certain symptoms of emptiness therein, and the disappearance of looked-for metallic records therefrom). Additional chairs and forms were dragged from the kitchen, and extra rushlights posted on available eminences for the unusual event. Drinking vessels, too, of multifarious patterns were industriously improvised, the general disposition being to contribute by individual effort and exertion to the weal of this night's festive commonwealth; and right well did they succeed, for as "Blatherbill" waddled in his huge chair with outstretched legs holding his free

short pipe in his encircling lips, he transcended all former efforts, however successful in the field of doubtful lore, although it was a subject of comment that his present vein was of rather a hard, serious mood, instead of the ephemeral flights that were wont to set the table aglow with mirth and whisky.

“Wid two smoothin’ irons? Arrah, what d’ye mayne, Blatherbill?” The inquirer looked steadfastly at mine host.

“Divil a ‘lie, I repayte, ‘tis all thruth an’ no other.”

“Hem! sthrange at any rate,” interrupted Johnny Dobbs, the ostler.

Balancing his clay pipe on the edge of its tin cover to permit the smoke to exude, and folding his arms on the table, “Blatherbill” looked decisively at his interrogator, saying,—

“I repayte, yis, I saw it mesel’, an’ she may thank the smoothin’ irons for gittin’ her a husband.”

Interestedly they closed around the speaker as he continued.

“There wor some allowance to be med for the poor sowl: twice he chaytid her, lettin’ her com back wid the whole counthry laughin’ in their shleeves at her, bud this time she wor detarmined to hav’ him, an’ no wondher.”

“More power to her praytecake,” observed his wife triumphantly, waking up a responsive chorus of assent.

“The power wor in the irons, an’ not the praytecake, ma bouchal; tho’ a nob av fresh butther shlung on the top av wan av thim same an’ let tumble agin the trap door to yer stomach is betther nor takin’ out a disayzed tooth wid an ould saw.”

This graphic allusion to an alimentary item of common interest and general delectation induced an emptying of the glasses in accord.

Whether amused with himself, or in-

terested at the prospect of the empty measures waiting replenishment, was not known, but a smile stole across the face of "Blatherbill" as he proceeded.

"Well, shure, all wint fair wid Biddy till the mornin' av the marriage, whin as usual Tim wor dhrunk or pretinded to be, jist as he thrated her afore; poor Biddy sat down in front av the fire while he shnored, she purshuaded herself to cry, bud knowin' enof kep her eye an thricky Tim, till she saw he wor skaymin', whin goin' over to him she said, 'Now, Tim, up wid ye; home I'll niver go till we've bin to his riverince,—not that he'd marry us while yer dhrunk, but ye see av we only git that far, they can't hav' all the laugh agin me whin I go back, an' I'll niver belayve ye in future av ye don't com now.'

"He thried to soften her, but it wor no use, so aff they thrudged to Father Blake. Niver wor Tim so dhrunk as whin he

sthoo'd afore his riverince, and Father Blake sed as how he would marry thim, bud to com agin to-morrow.

“ ‘Throth, thin,’ sez she, ‘av id’s not to-day, ’twill niver be: what’s yer riverince’s objection?’ ”

“ ‘Objection! why, the man’s drunk.’ ”

“ ‘Dhrunk!’ sheshouted, lettin’ fall two smoothin’ irons from under her arms, that made the priest and Tim tumble agin aiche other, Tim havin’ the best, for Father Blake lay an the floor, an’ whither wid the irons or the fright, Tim niver wor so sober since or afore. But gittin’ up an’ recoverin’ a little, his riverince comminced sayin’ he wartn’t shure what to do, whin shelifted the irons, an’ puttin’ wan on the table towards his riverince heavy, an’ the other heavier to Tim, the saramony began at wanst. Jist whin Tim had to sphake his words he hesitated, she med a sphring at the irons, whin he an’ the priest shouted, and to the prisint hour nayther knows who had the

lasth word, or how they escayped the murtherin' shmoothers."

Throughout this recital "Blatherbill" developed his accustomed mannerism, and the laughter greeting its conclusion was loud and spontaneous, which would probably have induced other cognate efforts, but that abruptly a fair, lithe young man stood in the doorway, when they uprose, warmly welcoming him, to the exclusion of all other thoughts,—the words of the new comer, "I need hardly assure you of my gratitude for your kind wishes," being echo'd by a concurrence of "Thru for ye, an' God speed ye."

"This is yer lasth night among us, Misther Walther," continued mine host: "may ye return from Ameriky lucky in yer sarche."

"Amen! Amen!" confluently followed.

"Somehow," replied the object of their solicitude, "I have a predetermined conviction of finding my brother, and" (hesi-

tating)—— “Misther Vincent! Misther Vincent!” exclaimed eager voices.

“’Tis even so: despite all we have heard, and some of the reports look true, I cannot believe in their untimely end.”

“But why didn’t they turn up whin the ould Lord died?”

“I wish ‘ould Nick’ had the prisint wan anyhow,” said the groom from Lord Darecourt’s establishment, who was approvingly nodded to for the remark. Seemingly unmindful, the latest arrival proceeded,—

“You know I am somewhat of a fatalist, and often since my brother escaped with the Hon. Mr. Darecourt, I have dreamed of them in one position, and in one place, until I am convinced there is reality in it.”

“Blatherbill” now looks very reflective.

“Yer larnin’ has turned yer head,” suggested Widdy Flannagan.

“Well, I cannot agree with you; true, owing to the care bestowed on me by my brother, I had many opportunities of pre-

ferment unknown to him, and believe I have fairly employed them to advantage, but if there be aught of benefit in this, surely it will give me a larger chance of unveiling the mystery of Darecourt, and with it my brother."

The landlord gazed long and earnestly into the last speaker's face, as he inquired,—

"Have ye bein dhraymin' lately what ye tould me long ago, Misther Walther?"

"Yes."

"Whin?"

"Last night."

"That the two escaped from Galway?"

"Yes."

"In a small boat?"

"Yes."

"An' not a sowl knew thim?"

"They were not recognized."

"I shware, word for word, I draymed that mesel' lasth night." This was uttered by Gaffeney in a tone of concern

hitherto unknown in him, and the general surprise thereat was greatly increased when his wife added,—

“Yis, at the time he tould me exactly what he now sez.”

By a sort of powerful attrition, all crowd closely where young Walter Dillon and “Blatherbill” sternly face each other.

The former now assumes the rôle of questor.

“In your dream you saw my brother?”

“Yes.”

“How did he look?”

“Very sad and wretched like.”

“Exactly. Did you try to converse together?”

“No; all my looks wor bint an his companion.”

“So were mine. Describe his companion.”

“I don’t know how; id wor the most melancholy, broken-hearted face I iver saw.”

"Too true, so it was. Did it soon turn aside from you?"

"No, it watched me in a way that med me think of somethin' years ago, the eyes, the mouth, the forehead, the form, av—av—— Great God! look, 'tis there: see, the lost heir av Darecoort!"

All eyes are strained to the dewy window, whereat, on the outside, resting against it, were the very facial lineaments just mutually depicted.

For a brief moment they are bereft of speech and power to move, but quickly young Dillon recovered himself, while the apparition had disappeared.

"Some of you keep me company," he said, vaulting across the table, followed by half a dozen willing hands. An interval of a quarter of an hour wore on in agonizing suspense, when Walter and his "Aides" returned, their looks proclaiming a fruitless errand.

"Seen nothing?" asked the landlord contentiously.

“ No, nothing, tho’ we scoured the road nearly two miles,” was uttered very dejectedly.

“ What can it mayne ? ” inquired Mistress Gaffeney, suppressing her voice, and adding, “ No sign for two miles, Misther Walther ? ”

“ None,” he replied.

“ Then,” observed “ Blatherbill,” “ it wor no stranger to the wood av Feltram.”

Each and all were relieved by the “ Good night, God speed ye,” which announced the unexpected breaking up of the gathering.

CHAPTER IV.

VINCENT DARECOURT was only child of the lord of that name, who, intolerant and imperious in all things, destined his son for an ambitious rôle in the war of ascendancy then rampant in Ireland.

The Lady Darecourt had been dead many years, and as the noble widower heard Vincent was at last housed in classic Eton, he became somewhat relieved of an unspoken restraint, and abandoned himself to habits of moroseness and impecuniosity.

The tenants on his broad estates felt the severity of his rule, a common phrase among them, descriptive of injustice, being "As bad as ould Darecoort."

Things had gone on in this fashion for many years, until at length they attained a culminating point, when some overt act was contemplated by the tenantry of the Darecourt property to bring its owner to a sense of justice.

Morose, sullen, and saturnine, Lord Darecourt slept his time in peace and dry content, unconscious of much that was current in the neighbourhood, but well assured his trusted confidant and agent (Misther Brien Flynn) left no stone unturned to enforce his behests.

Like many of this class, Brien was essentially born one of the people, but being of a remarkably close turn of mind, he early displayed habits of great frugality and industry, which yielded small yet certain results ; and, however small, they were none too little for him.

Pence grew to shillings, the latter developed into pounds, and the bad times permitted of endless opportunities for

extortion, such chances never being missed by the ready and astute Brien. To have the reputation of being rich is sometimes of as much value as the actual possession thereof. Yet so marvellously sudden was the transition from nothingness to undoubted wealth in this case, that people involuntarily gazed somewhat vacantly when his disliked form went by in that well-appointed gig, and, scratching their heads, usually said, "Begorra, it bangs Bannagher."

As Brien Flynn climbed higher towards the vane of worldly ambition he changed remarkably. Thinner and narrower he became in physical and mental proportions, viewing all from one standpoint, and that was money.

The most adamant heart has surely some vulnerable spot: at least, so it seemed to be with him. Repellent, nay, scornful to others, and barely civil to those whom he once knew well, he yet contrived to keep

up a semblance of affectionate interest for Molly MacCarthy, going every evening to her snug compact house to gloat over his present gains and future prospects.

This continued until the neighbours in many ways showed their resentment to Molly, who naturally enough came to be regarded as the future Mistress Flynn, and "May his bad money do the hussy good," was often jeeringly hissed at her as she passed. Now it happened that Brien Flynn never indulged in a tender expression to Molly MacCarthy, regular as he was in visiting her home, nor did he upon any occasion admit or deny the report commonly regarding them as being engaged. It was not so, however, with the other party to the supposed contract. As she became more spoken of and avoided by the villagers and her former acquaintances, she began to depend more and more on him for protection, and in this frame of mind Molly quietly waited for the day when he would

say they were to be married without previously asking her permission.

Time rolled on uneventfully in this way, until one morning it suddenly became known that Brien Flynn was installed as agent over the Darecourt property. With open mouths and pallid faces, the people stared, awed and amazed ; but there was the hard incontrovertible fact, and very soon his sagacity and greediness were manifested by the imposition of supplementary grievances unknown even in the lord's stern rule. The popular dislike of Brien was at all times deep if not external, but when it had been found that from the day of his advent to Darecourt he had cut Molly MacCarthy dead, people turned away in loathing from him.

“Murrain on ye, bud ye'd deny yer mother, ye annathural baste !”

“How cud he whin she died years ago to git away from his greedy claws ?” was the speedy response.

“He’s no worse nor his masther anyhow; not that that same’s much to boast av bethune you an’ me.”

“’Pon me sowl ye’r right, yit av I had the hangin’ av both, I’d giv dirty Brien the longist dhrop as the shortist road to the divil.”

This was how the lord and his business representative came to be regarded by those who only claimed the right to live and let live. And so we find them on a certain winter night when the warring elements above failed to assuage the stormy agitation within them. The merciless wind rushed savagely by, disporting with the large flakes of snow that pirouetted in fantastic shapes, or fell heavily in muffled thuds on the closely carpeted earth.

In the wide, dense, overgrown Feltram Wood no sound disturbed the hollow music of the snow dance, drifting into its deepest dell and obliterating its greatest eminence, snapping almost large branches which had

bravely withstood autumn's perils, yet now quail and perish beneath the ever recurring olivet layers.

The leveret, rabbit, and wild cat slunk into their cheerless cells, while the indigenous feathery race above, if in existence at all, evinced no symptom of being alive. The scene, however, in the wood near the old time-tossed windmill was now earnestly impressive. An opening had been lately made and remade, as the accumulating drift underwent a repetition of the clearing process by those undaunted weird-looking forms moving unflaggingly to the task. Half a dozen lanterns shed a fitful hazy gleam of striving light, their energy and disposition to shine being violently assailed by the biting wind. Nevertheless they were flitted to and fro as beacons on that tempestuous night, and many an eye moved sympathetically to their dancing demon-like beams viewed at first from the grim uncertain distance.

By the hour of midnight a curious scene was being enacted at the before-mentioned windmill. In its shade, fronting the clearing, but subject to all the impulse of the storm, a compact body of stalwart men stood intently listening to words addressed to them by a melancholy-looking, yet passionate young man, who was also exposed to the full severity of the weather. He was somewhat demonstrative and dramatic in appearance, but his words burned upon his auditors' ears, showing their results in the subdued breathings of those who eagerly listened, absorbed and deeply resolved.

Other speakers had had their say, and like their many prototypes in this mundane sphere, might have left it unsaid, so far as visible effect went.

"It must be so," proceeded the successful orator. "God wills not injustice, and we have borne its brunt too long."

Obedience is a forward link in the silken

chain of virtue, but we may outstep its truest value, as those do who cannot distinguish between tyranny and the claims of honesty. A volume of "Go an, right ye are," etc., etc., rose upon the night, and faded into mystic space as he resumed :—

"By Lord Darecourt we are wronged, cruelly so, indeed; but age shields him from our aggressive action. He reviles our most sacred belongings, and contemns our appeals to be fairly judged, listening to the representations of that villain Brien Flynn."

Loud menacing words followed the allusion to 'Brien Flynn,' high above which however the orator was heard distinctly and vehemently.

"'Tis of him, this watch-dog of hell, I now speak. He has fattened on the visitations that Heaven has sent upon poor old Ireland : the deeper the ruin the greater his unhallowed gain."

Tumultuous agitated voices came,—
“Down with Flynn! Hurrah! lade us an:
hurrah! ’Tis now or niver, an to Dare-
coort; ’tis jist the night. Into the lake
wid the agent afore we rest. Away,
away!”

By a simultaneous move they rush to where the orator excitedly stands, when suddenly a powerful athletic young man leaped over the white bushes and confronted them calmly, with outspread hands motioning them to silence.

“Your words,” he said, “have reached my attentive ear. If the dark wrongs exist that you assert, with the aid of Heaven my mission here is and shall be to do you justice.” Warmly extending his hand to the successful and flushed orator, he continued, “You know me, do you not?”

“Oh, wonder!” was shouted by the latter. “It is the young lord of Darecourt!”

CHAPTER V.

VINCENT DARECOURT, walking homewards in the snow, asked of his companion, Eustace Dillon, many questions of local interest. As boys they had been fast, loyal friends ; but when the former left home for England, all personal remembrance of each other seemed to have departed with him.

Vincent possessed a very sanguine temperament, regarding everything in the most ornate, hopeful guise, and amid the variety of his new superficial life at Eton he postponed writing to Eustace so indefinitely, that at length he resolved on waiting until they met, which he opined would be soon ; but it happened his many vacations were never spent in Ireland, and thus

in the long stream of a fashionable existence the former friend was neglected.

Eustace Dillon was his direct opposite in race, habits, temperament, and position. He deeply pondered on the untoward delay in hearing from Vincent, but when this neglect was maintained until it became certain no communication was intended, he bitterly thought of his once-trusted friend's faithlessness, and his melancholy, pensive nature soon supplied a motive, as it whispered, "How foolish to think of the unstable past. Vincent Darecourt will be a lord, and great amid the great, while I am nature's lowliest offspring, a poor, poor gentleman!"

Eustace Dillon's parents were dead, leaving him a very small annuity wherewith to maintain himself and his much younger brother, Walter.

His father had been wealthy, but exhausted himself and his property in a fruitless effort to establish his claim to the title and possessions of the FitzDillons.

As Eustace slowly realized the difficulties inseparable from his straitened circumstances, he became very gloomy and despondent.

Pale, spiritless, and retiring, he made no friends, nor did he wish to know strangers ; rather leaning towards solitude and contemplation, his great absorbing anxiety being for his helpless brother.

“ If I could see his future assured,” he mused, “ I would quit this desolate land and fight my way to an honourable distinction in another.”

But the opportunity never came, and he moved through life the same pensive brooding misanthropist. To the villagers he was always available with sapient counsel and solid advice, in which way he heard of their hardships under the *régime* pursued at Darecourt ; indeed, it seemed at once as if his long abandoned energy found therein a congenial groove for kindred action ; thus inspired, throwing

himself eagerly into the breach, he became the recognized champion of the “down-trodden people.”

Acting on their behalf, he one day presented himself at Darecourt Castle, to acquaint its noble owner with the position of affairs; but to his utter chagrin, and even disgust, he was ushered into the presence of the agent, who sardonically observed, “Lord Darecoort’s bysiness is as much mine as id is his, an’ whativer ye hav’ to sphake to his lordship ye can say to me : that’s jist how the matther sthands.”

Distraught with passion, Eustace shouted, “Yes, you base-born varlet, it is because Lord Darecourt has forgotten what is due to himself, and those under him, by adopting a village cur to be his representative, that I am here to-day to warn him.”

“Warn him !” echoed the middleman, “the likes av ye warn me lord—ha ! ha !”

In an instant the laugh was crushed out of his cavernous mouth, as he lay a dis-

tempered mass, felled by a blow from Eustace Dillon, who exclaimed with trembling accents of rage, " Oh, why have I lived to be derided by a wretch low enough to be rejected by scorpions, and in the house of one not good enough to be my equal were his spoils of pillage and plunder restored to their lawful owners ! "

The recumbent man answered, " I'll live to pay ye for this bad day's work."

Instantaneously Eustace dropped on his right knee, and catching the agent by the collar of his coat, drew him close, his mouth almost touching his ear while he uttered, in heated abrupt words, " By the recollection of all that's dear or prized in the past or future I will never rest in my design until I have accomplished such a recompense as your misdeeds and infamy richly deserve ! "

Notwithstanding his ready habit of self-possession, Brien Flynn crept deeper into his corner as his antagonist departed, a

strange defiant reverberation of the ominous words still clinging to him.

Eustace Dillon fairly inflamed his few auditors by a fiery recital of his interview with the agent of Darecourt, and it was un-animously agreed to secure the attendance of all the employés on the property in Fel-tram Wood, with the result which we have already shown in the foregoing chapter.

By the time they reached the principal entrance to Darecourt, its future owner had had a fair *resumé* of the whole position from Eustace Dillon. The former accounted for his untoward appearance at the meeting by stating that his return from Eton was yet unknown to his father, who very seldom communicated with him, and who, indeed, left him to take care of himself. During a recent illness, as usual, no letters came from his parent, and on recovering he was advised to seek change of air, when he suddenly resolved to return home. No conveyance being readily avail-

able in the city at that hour, for so long a distance and in such weather, he set forward (contemplating a surprise) on foot, and passing Dillon's well-known house, looked in, when young Walter told him of the meeting in the wood, and, it being on his way, he determined on gratifying his curiosity by observing it from a distance, diligently watching, with no little interest, the whole proceeding.

“ Some fatality has brought us together, be assured.”

These words were spoken by Eustace as they stood under the shade of the lofty trees surrounding Darecourt Lodge.

“ Whatever the fatality, I shall know my duty,” was responded. “ For years past I have come to regard things in a different aspect from the prejudiced one in which they were originally presented to me, and an intestine strife above all others can be generally traced to some local and unjust cause.”

“Local and unjust they are, and I am truly glad to hear the appropriate designation come from you.”

“Then a prompt remedy shall be found for the hideous wrong. Good night, Eustace,” continued the speaker, “and may our meeting be the happy omen of a still happier future.”

“Amen! amen!” was responded warmly. “To-night I shall seek my pillow, with a lighter heart and more composed mind than I have known for years—ay, since last we met,”—and shaking hands firmly and heartily, they parted.

A moment later Vincent jumped over the low wall separating him from the broad tree-lined avenue leading to Darecourt Castle, and alighting on the other side he staggered against a man concealed behind evergreens effectually screening him from the road. Recovering himself, Vincent at once seized the unknown with a vice-like grip, inquiring,—

“ Who are you ? Why have you been spying in this place ? ”

“ Ye impartinint puppy, take yer hands av me at wanst.”

“ Not till I know who you are.”—The grasp was tightened.

“ Yer shuparior, anyhow, av ye keeps company wid the likes av Misther Eustace Dillon.”—The hold was now beginning to be stifling.

“ Untruthful hound ! Mr. Dillon is a gentleman, and my best friend. Tell me who are you, ere I choke you.”

“ Curse ye, take yer hands av me, afore I have all the labourers up to dhrag ye thro’ the pond.”

The hold was now insupportable while they struggled on to the avenue.

“ Let me go, I say. I’m wan av the ‘ Darecoorts.’ ”

“ Base liar ! I will have the truth out at once. Who are you ? Answer quickly, or I will render you speechless.”

Exhausted from the prolonged struggle, the assailed had hardly sufficient strength to stammer,—

“I’m Brien Flynn.”

“What, the agent?” relaxing his hold in surprise.

“Yis, an’ I’ll make ye know id t’ yer cost, who’iver ye are.”

“I’m a friend of Mr. Dillon’s: is not that enough?” derisively.

The agent’s courage was fast returning.

“Little as I think av him, his frinds gineraly hav’ a name,” he retorted.

“Well! would you like to know mine?” was spoken listlessly.

“Id ’ill save me the disagreeable throuble av findin’ out, anyhow.”

“Then, I am——”

“Who?” apprehensively.

“Vincent Darecourt,” slowly.

“Oh, moighty power!” he exclaimed,
“’tis the young lord!”

CHAPTER VI.

THE meeting between Lord Darecourt and his only son and heir was as devoid of parental affection or even interest as can well be imagined

After an interval of five years they confront each other, but alas ! how changed !

The father wore the visible impress of time's inflexible finger in his deeply indented face and stooping gait ; and would it ended there ! but no, there was a harsh, cruel, greedy look in the thin curves of those thinner lips and small pivot eyes which astonished and alarmed the well-proportioned son now anxiously regarding him. The voice, too, was so raspish and keen that the latter repeated his inquiry

concerning his father's health, with a concern broadly tinged with curiosity, to hear the querulous "pretty well" peevishly repeated.

The interview terminated abruptly, by a sudden intimation from Lord Darecourt that the present was his usual hour for privacy and retirement—an invariable rule not to be departed from. Biting his full arched lip Vincent essayed a further solicitous remark, which was rudely repulsed as his father pointed towards the portal.

Rebuked and sorrowful, the heir of Darecourt lowered his head and passed through the doorway, on the outside whereof he stumbled over a man kneeling.

"What ! another eavesdropper ?"

"I wor only tyin' me shoe. Ah !" looking up, "the liv long night I've bin thinkin' av yer honour, an' how anfortunate I wor in not knowin' yer lordship,—yit," rising, "me lord, me lord, ye'll forgiv'."

Regardless of his words Vincent walked

towards the end of the corridor, but when the agent called him "me lord, me lord," he suddenly turned, saying,—

"Peace, man, I am not Lord Darecourt," and immediately afterwards he was gone. His departing steps, however were still audible as Brien Flynn's eyes shone from out his livid distorted face, while silently muttering, "An' niver will be av I can help id."

The agent now gently entered the apartment, taking his accustomed chair before the noble owner of Darecourt, who was awaiting him.

"Well, have you succeeded?"

"Intoirely so, me lord."

"How many notices were served?"

"Forty-three, me lord."

"Good. If that does not subdue them I shall eject every tenant on the property, and colonize it with Englishmen."

The owner of Darecourt did not observe the hot flush lighting up his agent's sallow

face, who had not yet lost all his nationality, but who, however, discreetly replied :

“ Yer lordship’s too wise for the likes av me to advise.”

“ Nay, nay. I hearken to your counsel with interest. Is it not on your advice that I have decreed the present measures against my stubborn tenants, who, as you say, will not follow, but must be driven ?”

This time the agent covertly smiled, and in pleasant tones responded,—

“ I cannot deny, me lord, som share in the great work av improvemint now goin’ an ; depind an me word, yer lordship,” he added with resolution, “ whin the day is carried ivery sintince I sphoke ’ill com throe.”

“ Did you meet my son Mr. Vincent, who left the room almost as you entered ?”

“ Ay, me lord, I had that misforthin’ lasth noight.”

“ Misfortune !” was the blank rejoinder.

“ Well, shure as I didn’t expict his

honour, an' thinkin' it wor an inthruder, I worn't civil enof to the gintleman who I'd bind me knee to in politeness av coorse, an' why not, had I known at the time."

Lord Darecourt elevated his brows inquiringly, saying,—

"Where did you see my son last night?"

"At the mayn lodge frontin' the avenue."

"Late?"

"Past midnight, me lord."

"How odd!" escaped the nobleman.

"I thought he wor a sthranger, me lord."

"How did you learn he was not?"

"Not till he tould me, me lord. Afther I—I" (hesitating) "hard him in conversation wid——"

"Who? who?" inquired the old man.

The agent jealously searched the countenance of his employer as he laconically answered,—

"Wid Mither Dillon, me lord."

"What!" shouted Lord Darecourt in a voice at once supercilious and angry, "with

the man who above all others you say is hounding on the tenantry against me ? ”

“ I’m sorry av I don’ wrong in tellin’ yer lordship.”

“ No, no,” petulantly ; “ you have done quite right—but answer. Was my son with this agitator you have so often spoken against ? ”

“ Yis, me lord.”

“ The man who owns that small property the other side of the river ? ”

“ The same, me lord.”

“ Who calls himself a gentleman ? ”

“ And who is wan,” energetically. “ I beg yer lordship’s pardon,” said the agent, faltering, “ people call him a gintleman.”

“ Quite a different thing to your saying so, who have so frequently spoken the reverse.”

With which remark Lord Darecourt suffered his nostrils to resume their normal dimensions as he relapsed into his meditative mood, observing,—

“How can my son have met with this paltry person, and so soon too?”

“Perhaps,” suggestively, “me lord, he knew him afore he wint to the univarsity,” answered Flynn.

“No, no, he had but one companion ; to whom also Lady Darecourt was warmly attached. I forget his surname,” reflectively, “but he was familiarly called Eustace.”

The agent leaped in his chair at this discovery.

“What ails you, Flynn?”

“Thank ye kindly, me lord ; I wor near shlippin’ aff the chair, that’s all.”

“Oh, indeed ! singular !” came slowly from his noble employer. The ensuing pause was broken by Lord Darecourt saying, “I have been considering the subject we have just spoken upon, and I shall send for my son, to question him respecting his knowledge of this disreputable man. Please ring that bell,

Flynn," motioning to the communicating instrument.

"Ye'll pardon me, me lord, av I make so bould as to say I wouldn't sphake wan word about id at all at all, till I find what diffirince the young lord's comin' makes wid this misther; I mayne this Dillon."

"I cannot see cause for delay. However, as you understand these people and I do not, I will follow your suggestion."

"Thank ye, me lord, 'twill be the wisest coorse in the long-run."

"My son's return is so unexpected, and his account of it so vague, that I shall be glad to hear further of his movements; therefore, Flynn, keep a sharp look-out, and report to me what is passing."

"Me lord, thin wud yew wish me to watch the young lord an' this Misther Dillon particklarly."

"Young men are easily led away, and my son has been so long absent, that I cannot account for some possible foolish

vagaries he may have acquired ; therefore, I repeat, I shall be glad to learn more of his movements, especially with reference to his unaccountable knowledge of a person such as you have often represented this Dillon to be."

"Yer lordship knows I'm yer humble sarvint, an' ye can depind an me anteg-rity,"—a leer covered his averted face for an instant ; "no matther who I offind be doin' me duty it shall be don'." The last words were strongly articulated.

"That is right, Flynn; and to none other would I extend the same trust as I repose in you, because in all you say my interest appears to be foremost."

"I'm behouldin' to yer lordship for this disarvin' compliment,—indade I thry to merit id," rising. "Now I'll be afther takin' me respectful mornin's layve, as I want to git to Dublin afore 'tis late, to push an the lawyers wid the 'jick-mints.' "

“Flynn,” observed the noble owner of Darecourt, “you are ever intent on business; do precisely as you think best. But I regret you do not avail yourself of my offer to provide assistance. It is imposing too much labour upon one person.”

Looking the personification of meekness and renewing his iterations of gratitude to ‘me lord,’ the agent suavely bowed himself out, passing down the large stone flight of the castle stairs with remarkable alacrity and precision.

Brien took a key from an inner pocket, and unlocking a small private postern-gate, let himself into the large plantation at the rear of the building.

Continuing his rapid walk through the tortuous verdant route, he speedily found himself facing a low bricked archway, quite obscured by the surrounding foliage. Looking neither right nor left, with decisive steps striding over the mosses and briers struggling for existence on

those deep, well-cut stairs in the hard flinty ground, heedless of that circle dug out of mother earth, around which a natural bench extended, he crossed to the opposite side and went down three yet lower steps, wherefrom confronting a deep well in semi-darkness, whose water lay between him and a stone altar used in bygone days for the purposes of religion. To take a small plank from a recess at his side, and place it with one end leaning upon the stone block and the other on the lower step whereon he stood, was the work of a moment. Passing over this tiny bridge, walking to the back of the altar, and touching a secret spring therein, the huge monolith of granite moved inwards, revealing a passage down which he went, while the sacrificial emblem of the past returned to its original position.

This passage led into another yet wider and better lit, whereby he reached a third

of proportionate improvement, at the end whereof stood a large angular well-shaped chamber, whose grey walls were fitted with various recesses and wooden presses, some few articles of wearing apparel being visible on the outside of these latter; one massive oak chest of enormous size stood in a corner conspicuous by its unequalled dimensions, and secured by a lock equally abnormal in appearance. An oak table in the centre and three chairs completed the leading characteristics of this weird apartment. Rapidly entering, the agent threw himself into one of the seats, burying his face in his hands.

Long and deep were his mental communings. At length in a measured calm tone he slowly said,—

“What a grate an’ disperate game! bud I’ll sink or shwim; ’tis too late to think av goin’ back now. I always loved money, bud I wor better av afore I kem to Dare-

coort; there me fate wor sayled, for the sight av the goold filled me wid a resthless itchin', an' be degrees I piled that chist so full it 'ill hould no more. The ould lord is now cumplately ondher me thumb. I wud go anfor iver robbin' him and not a sowl cud know id, bud that unlucky turn up av the son maynes me ruin." He paused. "What is best to be don'? It looks as av forthune sthands be me; the ould lord axed me to thrap his son, an' ha! ha! I'll thrap 'em both afore I'm tired. There'll not be much throuble gettin' the younsth in the mesh, bud curse an ye, Eustace Dillon, 'tis ye I hate and fear. Sthrange the lord forgot his name; howsomiver 'twor an-lucky to meet thim togither lasth noight." Another pause ere he resumes: "Some-thin' must be don' to save mesel'—put the ould man out av the world the young wan nets me all the sooner, yit somebody musht go, an' I don't intind ladin' the way. No, the goold is here, an' here I'll sthay till I

git more, thin they may look for hanest Brien Flynn."

After another interval he decidedly said, "Me game is to wait, wait, wait; git the young lord into disgrace wid the father, and banish him, av not keep me eye an a chance av puttin' him clane out av the world widout risk; in ayther case I'll sthick to the prisint lord and bamboozil him to me heart's contint till I'm don' wid him. Dillon gripped me wanst, and be the many gooldin guineas I've hid here in the ould cloisthers av St. Bridgid's Abbey I'll rip him yit, whin a thrust in the dark can be sthruck from a sthrange hand for a sthrong considherashun. Com'," and he waxed excited, "pearls av me joy! ye'r me only comfort, me paice av mind, let me look at yer goolden beauty: what else hav' I to care for! Goold! goold! here's more," throwing in specie, "an' from this hour begins me fight agin iter-nity itself."

In stooping, his head touched one of the recesses before mentioned, and the outer door fell back, revealing a tall dark young man with a pale irresolute face fixedly regarding him; and uttering a loud shriek the agent fell senseless to the ground.

CHAPTER VII.

A DOZEN years ago, as at the present time, the neighbours came to the "Darecourt Arms" of a night to dissipate a few hours, and mayhap money.

The primitive habits of the people, however, forbade excess, especially at the former period when society was undermined, the country beggared, and a reign of terror still survived—meet legacies of the rebellion which had but lately desolated Ireland.

At the village hostelry the sudden return of the young lord was freely commented upon, and many reasons assigned for it, all, however, being mere conjecture.

In reality none came, even approxi-

mately, to the truth, only one thing being known and heartily felt—that “ God bless him, he wor not like his father, an’ the days av the bad agent wor numbered.” This sent a sudden reaction throughout the district, everything becoming rapidly improved and comparatively prosperous. The desirable impetus was nowhere felt more than at the “ Darecourt Arms,” where trade revived appreciably. A weight seemed to be lifted off the people, they moved free of restraint, and there was no necessity now for inquiring who is who.

All this confidence and amelioration of wrongs growing up since the advent of the young lord, even the detested Brien was seldom seen and less thought of.

The personal attendant upon Vincent Darecourt was an Englishman, pensioned from the army, in whose ranks he had seen much service. He possessed an honest-looking face, crowned by a few bristling grey hairs which, with military pertinacity,

always inclined the one way. An ardent lover of the soothing weed, he drank little, but smoked and ruminated a great deal, and no one knew that unobtrusive, tall, weatherworn man, with his three medals the records of hard fought battles, but deeply respected him. He was speedily installed first favourite at the "Darecourt Arms," where his genial smile and untutored speech gained him many earnest admirers and sympathizers.

That he was valet to the young lord was enough indeed to achieve this result; but when saying with moist, expressive eyes, the only truly happy years of his life were the few short ones when both a husband and a father, though but a poor soldier, he became at once consolidated in the warmest esteem and affection of the villagers.

Every evening occupying his "own chair," as it was now usually called, in the snug corner where it stood, expressly dusted and arranged for him, he delighted

to smoke a long pipe in tranquillity, listening to the broad native humour tripping impulsively along. He had so constantly adverted to his married life in glowing terms that they would frequently request, "Arrah, be afther tellin' us all about id."

Hitherto the coaxing had been in vain, and entreaties proved inoperative, though never harshly declined; on the contrary, he seemed pleased to be the subject of such universal interest, smilingly saying, "I'm not up to it to-night: another time I'll respond to your call."

It happened on this particular occasion that every one seemed in unusually good humour and spirits, except the very man most thought of and considered. Sad and reserved the old soldier sat in his accustomed place, but seldom moved or spoke, and hardly smoked, as after a few abrupt puffs of the hitherto ever-welcome pipe, it hung neglected and unused between his closed lips.

In monosyllables only did he vouchsafe to answer when addressed, and altogether the barometer of general good spirits fell amazingly under his freezing influence. This example of apathy was fast becoming contagious, when the landlord, foreseeing a loss of business if it continued, bestirred himself to arrest the downward magnetic current, and after repeated appeals to him, George Rutherford, valet to the young lord, said, "I am sorry to be among you when I cannot do your kindness justice, but to-day I heard of the death of the officer under whom I first served, and who helped me to get married."

"Good luck to ye. Oh, don't sthop!" exclaimed several anxious voices nervously.

"Ay," said he, unmindful of the feeling he was fast awakening, "and on one occasion he saved the lives of my wife and two children, and probably my own."

"Arrah, shure, Mither Rutherford, more power; go an, go an, do avick, an' I'll say

haf a dozen prayers for ye." This and other like petitions reached him, but they were hardly heeded, for, oddly enough, at this instant, he displayed a marked inclination to proceed on his own account ; after some trivial preliminaries, continuing, "At an early age I 'listed in the 6th Regiment, lying at Fulwood barracks, Preston, and very soon picking up a chum, we passed our spare time together.

"We were both inclined to be saving even on our small pay, and no day passed that we did not put by four or five pence each to the good. Every evening we went to a certain house-of-call, the rule being to have a pot of beer between us, that was all, for which I paid one night and my comrade the next.

"There was dancing and singing at this public, in which neither myself nor my mate joined, but quietly smoking our pipes, we looked on until it was time to go."

The narrator now became somewhat

affected in tone and manner; however, "pulling up," as he said, the tale proceeded, "It was there I met my poor wife." Here he involuntarily sneezed, the large handkerchief encompassing his copper-coloured nasal organ even reaching to the eyes, while his sympathetic auditors consistently looked everywhere except towards the well-known corner whence the noise emanated.

The seemingly pause ended, he continued, with a deep inflation of lung and a voice much forced beyond its ordinary power,—

"On several occasions at the public-house I noticed a young woman looking at me, and I of course returned the compliment; at last we got so far as to salute each other, but we never spoke, for the reason that she was always seated beside a smart chap who, my chum and myself believed, must be her sweetheart. One evening we met as usual, and after saluting her I saw she was alone, whereupon walking straight

over and taking her hand respectfully in mine, I spoke firmly, ' Young woman, ever since I see'd you first I've loved you, and I never met another person I'd like to marry but yerself,' looking truthful, feeling what was said. She quickly replied, returning the squeeze of my hand, ' Young man, since meeting you first I respects you, and I have no objection to be your wife.' We then sat down, and I called for an extra pot of beer, beckoning my comrade to come to the table. She told us she expected her brother, who, we were surprised to find, was the young man we thought she kept company with ; he drank part of the can of ale, and seemed pleased to hear what had passed between me and his sister, giving us an invitation to go to their home and see their mother (the father was dead), which I did the next evening. No more of the public-house after that for me. I plainly told the mother how I was situated, but she would not hear

of marrying a soldier at any price, though she had no doubt I would make her a sober, honest husband.

“Day after day this went on, Lizzy and I getting fonder of each other, while the old girl, seeing this, began to hate me; but the brother William did all he could on my side. At last orders came, draughting us to ——: now there was no alternative, it must be yes or no; still the mother would not give way. In bidding her good-bye Lizzy burst out crying, declaring she would go with me, even without her parent’s consent; but I reasoned with her, saying, as we had to walk from Dublin to our destination, I could not reach my quarters before a certain day, which I told her, and we agreed that she would meet me on that very day, either with or against her mother’s wish.” Here the old soldier “wet his whistle” from the landlord’s proffered glass, the salutary example being

speedily imitated by the rest—out of their own measures, of course—though, to do them justice, they were more anxious to hear him “go an.” Proceeding, he observed, “There is no occasion to say that every day’s march which brought me nearer to my future quarters was most welcome. At last, on a cold wet morning, we commenced climbing up the steep hill leading to the barracks. My heart fell as I neared the top, seeing only strangers in that dismal place, though I strained my eyes in every direction ; and resigning all hope, I could have cried—indeed, I have often thought since that I must have done so—when from under a window-blind, where she had been sheltering, out stepped Lizzy, saying, ‘Young man, you see I’m punctual ;’—to which I answered, ‘Young woman, so I perceive.’ That day I told my Irish officer, Captain Darcy Burke, how the case stood. Although he scolded me warmly, he took us both in hand, put

her in lodgings in the town till we were married, and then helped us to commence housekeeping.

“ No wonder I felt sorry to hear of his death this day, though he must be very old. However, three years after our marriage we were living quite content and blessed with our two children. Captain Burke got me any odd jobs going, knowing I saved every penny for my home, while Mrs. Burke employed my wife whenever she could. Ah ! this was my happy time.”

Another appeal to the nasal organ was essayed, but the disposition to proceed proved irresistible, and he resumed, “ Things went on thriving and prosperous till orders suddenly arrived for so many men to be sent out at once to strengthen the regiments then fighting abroad, and it came to my turn to go.

“ In vain we reasoned with my wife ; she said no power should separate us, and I don't know how it would have ended had

not the good Captain Burke found a racketty dare-devil from his own parts, named Jack Walsh, to take my place for ten shillings cash down and two days' leave of absence for a last good spree. So it was settled, Jack receiving the money and getting the required furlough.

“ On the morning of the third day following the bugle sounded the parade, every one in the barracks turning out to wish Godspeed to the lads about to march to the port of embarkation, some twenty miles distant. I was cleaning the windows in the officers' quarters and chatting to my wife below at the same time, while the names of the men for foreign service were being called out. Suddenly, ‘George Rutherford’ sounded throughout the barrack square. ‘Here, sir!’ I exclaimed, running down, not knowing what it meant. ‘Fall in’ were the awful words: ‘in ten minutes we march.’ Jack Walsh had not returned, and there was no alternative but to take my place

in the ranks. My wife was simply mad, nothing would quiet her, and at last they could not restrain her from footing it the whole distance of twenty miles with our two children. She defied any power to separate us, and abroad we would go together. Nearly all we possessed was put up and sold by auction ; oddly enough, my wife was not so affected by this as I was. Fancy prices were paid on purpose, and everything that kindness could suggest was done to lessen our troubles ; but the broken-hearted wretchedness I felt when the order was given to march I shall never forget, as, each carrying one child and a bundle containing all we had left in the world, my wife and I commenced that dismal journey."

The narrator could withstand it no longer, and the big tears blinded him, while those listening also gripped their throats at something unusually sudden experienced therein.

The soldier went on in slower, though much lighter accents : “ Our brave captain thought of all that was possible to lighten the march, buying endless articles for the children. Their mother would take nothing, nor even speak, but walked on pale as a ghost. He allowed us to halt where we pleased, and there was not a man in the whole squad who did not beseech Lizzy to let him carry her child, which she refused, while I frequently took advantage of their friendly offers.

“ We had in this way got over half the journey, when the captain’s wife drove up on a private outside jaunting-car, so closely packed with boxes and luggage there was hardly room for herself and the driver. No sooner did Mrs. Burke see the mother and child than she comprehended the whole position ; and how she persuaded Lizzy I’ll never know, but in five minutes she was on the car beside her with the two children, the driver walking with us, while

the captain's wife, whip in hand, in his seat, dashed along the road followed by the hearty cheers of every man Jack of us, including her husband."

Hurried feet were now passing the "Darecourt Arms" at great speed, but within they heard nought save the veteran's story, who got so far as to say that, when he reached the seaport, the radical Johnny Walsh was there half-sober, waiting to fall in, and hence he was saved from going to the war. Loud cries of "Fire, fire!" caused every one, including the old soldier, to rush out, when, on the other side of the bridge, the lone house of Molly MacCarthy was discovered to be a mass of seething igneous flame. As they hastily approached the fated pile two figures were seen on the wooden roof, working might and main to break through it. It was known Molly slept in the upper chamber, hence the exertions of these two spectral objects in that red lurid flame.

Voices pealed high in excitement :
“ God bless the gintlemin ! shure isn’t id
thimselves, the young lord and Misther
Dillon ? ”

The latter at length broke through the beams, but whether with fright or premeditation it was impossible to say, there lay Molly MacCarthy dead, and her would-be deliverers had only time to jump from the roof on to blankets, provided by their sympathetic observers, ere the whole burning fabric collapsed and fell, destroying all in its sulphurous embrace, emitting millions of brilliant sparks. While the pile lay entombed in sickening vapour a dog-cart came rapidly along the high road, guided by a solitary muffled figure, who clearly wished to avoid recognition ; but the people had already surrounded the well-known vehicle, exclaiming, “ Oh, Misther Flynn, poor Molly MacCarthy is burnt to death ! Oh dear ! oh dear ! isn’t id awful ? ”

“Clear the way,” shouted the Darecourt agent, lashing his horse forward; “I can thrade an a livin’ pig, bud a ded woman’s cowl’d comfort anyhow.”

CHAPTER VIII.

LUCY NEVILLE, of Nevillstown, was as fine a specimen of an Irish lady as could well be found. Tall, proud, and dauntless, she, as herself said, went straight to the mark in all that she undertook, even a semblance of doubt or apprehension being unknown in her vocabulary. Her actions were characterized by this same resolution ; as though, however daring the enterprise, its facile achievement was assured beforehand. Her regular, pale, rounded face was seldom moved to superficial animation, but those large, expressive eyes, emerging from beneath well-pointed, dark lashes, were fiery with poetic life, which

the slightest incentive woke up to enthusiastic passion, or equally declared pity, as the varying impulse was eagerly imbibed by a comprehensive and ready grasp of all that passed around. With her to see was to appreciably realize the situation. Riding was her favourite amusement, although she could pull an oar and walk a fair journey across fields; but to mount a restive ill-tempered colt, and subdue it, was her great delight. At the "meet" to be second to Miss Neville was a vaunted triumph, and many a would-be Lothario remembered to his dying day the rich saucy laugh with which she regarded him rolling in the mud, whither he had followed her, while she nimbly flew over the concealed quagmire.

An orphan and an heiress, it is not to be marvelled at that she absorbed the inner thoughts of more than one love-lorn enthusiast; but no one had hitherto ventured on whispering a too soft sentiment, for

the simple reason, she never gave the necessary permission.

Quick as lightning, Lucy Neville knew what would follow, but raising that warning finger, and with it beating time to the ominous words, "No, no, no; it must not be; no more, please!" the abashed admirer generally sought relief, inwardly declaring, "Confound the girl! I cannot understand her."

The subject of her warmest thoughts was Eustace Dillon,—not that the feeling passed the domain of the deepest, truest, sisterly regard, but knowing his parentage, straitened circumstances, and his proud melancholy disposition, she often wished he were indeed her brother. Her aunt and guardian frequently invited Eustace to Nevillstown, every time Lucy met him the invitation was warmly supplemented; but, promises notwithstanding, he was very seldom seen there, and even these capricious visits at length ceased altogether.

Respectful pity is a dangerous feeling to play with in girlhood, but the self-willed Lucy never bothered her head about it: she had always liked Eustace Dillon, and always would.

She was also much attached to Fanny Chalmers, a young lady of her own age and nearly equal position. Miss Chalmers was the eldest child of a numerous family, and the direct antithesis of her dear friend Lucy Neville in every way, being at once slow, reserved, cautious, and plodding.

Few of her own sex cared for her, but real admirers were still fewer among the opposite.

This imparted to her a taciturn disposition and ready aptitude to discount everybody and everything to their or its disadvantage.

Yet these two girls were fond of each other; though, had they but known the phases of their future life and their

respective influence thereon, they would have anathematized the fatal hour they first became acquainted.

For some time preceding our story a feeling of coldness, skilfully masked, was being generated by the calculating Fanny Chalmers towards her companion Lucy Neville. She could trace it to no absolute cause, but in after-years she knew it was the offspring of envy, a selfishness which rose in her breast at the admiration every one manifested to Lucy, while herself was neglected if not avoided.

Singularly it happened that Lucy Neville, perspicuous and clear-sighted in all else, did not notice the altered demeanour in her friend, who insensibly but appreciably grew more reticent and frigid day by day. Eustace Dillon had often formed an embittered subject of conversation between them, and this morning his long-continued absence from Nevillstown was freely commented upon.

Fanny tartly resumed,—

“I am astonished to hear Lord Darecourt’s son and Mr. Dillon are always together ; indeed they seem close intimates.”

“Oh, I am so glad Eustace has found a companion of a kindred disposition !” was Lucy’s ardent exclamation.

“What, although this new friendship is the cause of his sacrificing an older one !” added Fanny warmly ; “I do not like him for it.”

“Nay,” said Lucy, “I am convinced there is another reason. I know too well that Eustace is incapable of forgetting his friends, much less of sacrificing them.”

“You forget it is not every day an heir like the Hon. Mr. Darecourt can be consorted with, and I am told he is positively *distingué*,” was rejoined.

“I suppose,” retorted Lucy in a tone of slight consequence, “the gentleman you speak of is just what he ought to be, neither more nor less, but you must not

forget in your fanciful admiration that Mr. Eustace Dillon is his equal, if not his superior, in all respects save one."

"And what is that one, pray?" was inquired with asperity.

"Paltry money."

"Decidedly the most cogent, to my mind," muttered Fanny Chalmers with a discordant laugh.

"Why are you so unlike yourself to-day, Fanny? You know I will suffer no one to attempt the depreciation of my playfellow Eustace Dillon, at least in my presence,"—and Lucy looked sternly at her companion Fanny while uttering these words.

The latter rose hastily, and moved to the door, observing,—

"I did not suppose that he could be of such consequence as to cause unnecessary irritation."

Repressing her warm resentment, Lucy followed to the landing, where, placing her

arms round Fanny, whom she impulsively drew towards her, she said in an almost mechanical tone,—

“It seems a dream to think of our differing about any one or for any one. Oh, let us forget it; come, Fanny, kiss and be friends; *we* cannot be any other.”

Miss Chalmers submitted to, but did not return, the affectionate greeting, and no other word passed between them while the former went downstairs and left the house.

The young mistress of Nevillstown cast herself into a chair, and vainly tried to crush the swelling feeling within her. Resolving to forget, she would relapse into another vein of musing, and wake up to find herself more deeply annoyed and wounded. She knew her warm advances towards reconciliation were repudiated, and felt that a chasm loomed ominously between herself and Fanny Chalmers.

The latter walked slowly homewards,

her immovable face suffused with a bitter expression of revengeful annoyance as the fostered thought grew. "She shall feel my jealousy yet when and where it is little expected! Friends indeed! never, Lucy Neville: we can and shall henceforth be implacable enemies."

Ah me! what a demon is pride, or who will curb the war-horse which a mistaken, thoughtless word has ere now created to devastate the home of a once trusted friendship!

Lucy Neville suddenly started to her feet and rang the bell, saying vehemently,—
"Let me escape from this angry influence;" when the servant entered, motioning impatiently,—
"Have Rover saddled at once; I will go for a long canter."

Ten minutes later she went forth from her home at a headstrong pace, heedless of every passing object, including Eustace Dillon, who, amazed, saw himself disregarded by her that out of the whole

universe he would have called his own, but he could not.

“What can have happened?” he thought. “Lucy Neville so absent-minded as not to see me is a problem indeed. This path, too, is hardly fit for her horse, though he seemed well pleased with the fleet mission, considering the rate at which he carried her along.”

Looking at his watch, he continued, “I have two hours to spare, and something impels me to follow her. Brave, noble Lucy!”—as he retraced his steps,—“there are too few like you in this adamant world where all is selfishness and for self. Who but you felt for me when my lot was dark indeed, and feels for me still? and would I not lay my life at your feet?”

He had now reached the long, low, crest-drilled sands, and, to his surprise, there was Miss Neville in a dejected contemplative posture upon her ambling horse, the loose reins dangling idly beside his mane.

Hesitating whether to proceed or not, Eustace Dillon mused : " I never saw Lucy so unlike herself, but I will go to her, although in some way I feel as thereby anticipating a fate which it was a mercy to postpone."

Unconscious of being watched and solicitously followed, or that she was nearing the low-lying rocky breakwater which had long lain abandoned to the overpowering accumulations of sand, Lucy Neville moved carelessly along.

The golden sheen of those placid elastic receding waves bore no charms for her now, though she usually revelled in their varying tints of crystal beauty. Nor did the vast covies of sea-fowl energetically pursuing them to glut on their treasures, revealed upon the wet sand, yield her any interest ; she was listless, sad, and dispirited, as though for the first time in that young life an indefinite impost was cast and forged, portending sorrow.

“ Help, help !” now faintly smote her ear from a voice on the far side of the break-water seawards. Rising in the saddle, she looked in vain : nothing was to be seen but Nature’s great domain of sand and wave, unrelieved by a single solitary object save that guiding “ black buoy ” in the distance, hardly discernible from the dark waters which the low swift ebb hurried against it. Again a weaker “ Help ” assailed her attentive ear, and lifting the horse with one wild convulsive bound she sped through the rent air with an energy of speed and purpose, sending the blood impetuously leaping in its knotted channels. Eustace Dillon, too far off to hear or be heard, wondering at this sudden violent movement, commenced running at the top of his speed in the line whither she was fleeing ; for knowing that on the left the course was circumscribed by the Darecourt property, while straight in front lay the sea, and on the right the

breakwater, he calculated on soon overtaking her.

Overwhelmed with astonishment and dismay, he beheld her head the fiery hunter towards the base of the stony rift, as back flew the layers of shells and sand rudely disgorged by those deep indenting horny hoofs. The tide was not wholly out ; but, instead of shirking the small lake which it fed, she ploughed through it, emerging therefrom on the opposite side scarcely recognisable by distance and mud.

Not a trace of uncertainty was about her now. No, she was Lucy Neville once more, and his heart rose suffused with an enthusiast's pride to see how both from shoulders and arms she lifted the responsive eager horse along.

“ Oh God ! ” he breathlessly exclaimed : “ hold, hold ! Oh, girl, you are lost, you are lost ! ”

Lucy heard not, nor for the thousandth

part of a second did she waver. There was the wide-spreading breakwater, and her horse must carry her across its rocky crest or they would perish. Did not that cry for help come from one as dear or dearer to heaven than she was?

For an instant the proud panting animal, with the snow-flecks upon his red nostrils, threw forward both ears and tossed his head apprehensively as the rising ground appeared in front with the dark line of granite wall beyond; Lucy in silence passed her gloved hand along his mane, which was enough, for lashing that full tail, bending back those ears, and lowering his head, as though to hide the perilous ascent from view, Rover settled into an even, steady, uniform motion, biding the time for the supreme effort.

The face of the breakwater was thickly coated with seaweed, wherein the mussel, periwinkle, and barnacle found a slimy home, at the top being somewhat of a

plane, but the sides were formed of immense blocks of grey granite thrown down indiscriminately to arrest the invasion of sand and waves against the inner concrete lines of the artificial structure. Transfixed, Eustace Dillop at last observed Lucy bend lower in the saddle as she attempted the mad ascent, and it seemed a map of his whole life rose spread out before him in bold relief while contemplating the awful venture. No, no, he could not, dare not look on ; and, covering his eyes with each hand, he fell upon his knees, while from within stole up supplicatingly, “ Heaven spare her life.” Now he ventured to rise again. There she was almost on the top of the rocky ridge ; the horse, having his own way, makes a last plunge, his fore-feet already bite the loose covering of the plateau, when, alas, he falters, but Lucy’s reserved courageous strength is watchfully at hand, and dexterously moving on Rover they are instantly landed in safety. Not

one iota of hesitation succeeds ere horse and rider are plunging on again towards the end of the embankment in wildest speed Eustace, too, is climbing its base, when, beyond himself with surprise, he beheld Lucy still goading her steed forward. Twice Rover has been wheeled round to jump into the deep waves washing the extreme point of the breakwater, and as often did he refuse the leap. Once more he is faced at it, but, again refusing, Lucy rises in the saddle and dives into the sea on the far side from where Eustace Dillon is running onwards.

“She’s mad!” he shouted, as he threw off his coat. “Peace be to you, Lucy Neville. No human arm could save you in this falling tide, but he who has long lived for you alone will at least share your untimely grave.”

The next instant Eustace Dillon was dividing the waves by a wide bold breast-stroke to a floating object in the distance.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Brien Flynn recovered consciousness, he found himself, seated in a chair, his face resting against the table, with his neckcloth unloosed, and the pale young man intently looking from the agent to the immense chest of loose gold, and *vice versa*.

The expression of the stranger was one rather of anxiety than surprise, but he spoke not, evidently wishing the initiative to come from across the table.

The agent had essayed to address him more than once, but hesitated ; now, however, summoning all his courage, he said in faltering words,—

“ Who are ye, sir ? ”

“Dorrington Darecourt,” was politely replied.

“What !” starting in surprised attitude,
“the nephew av Lord Darecourt ?”

“The same.”

“An’ couzin av Misther Vincint ?”

“Yes.”

“Thin ye are the gintleman as sint me keurious information be post ?”

“I am.”

“Oh dear ! oh dear !” with a heavy sob,
“what a load that takes av me mind !”
observed the deputy.

“Which I am glad of,” responded his observer.

A pause followed.

Manifestly there was a confluence of unspoken feeling between them, but each wished the other to speak first. During this interval the agent discovered that the valuable chest was wide open, revealing its enormous contents. Alarmed, he jumped up, quickly closing and locking the treasure,

when Dorrington Darecourt cynically drawled out, "I hope there is no necessity for this precaution, Mr. Flynn!"

"Well, sir, I'll not bate about the bush, —ye shall hav' yer share an' welkim," putting down a large roll of bank-notes, "but I'd lose me life sooner nor part wid any wan av thim goolden guineas.

"Ah!" he continued in a softer tone, "it is me only comfort to com down here an' look at me savins,"—in confusion—"I mayne me—me—well—well, ye know what."

"I only know, Mr. Flynn," was quickly answered, "I am very glad to make your acquaintance, that I feel much obliged for these notes," which he placed in his pocket, "and that the sooner I can be of service in enabling you to get more, the better pleased I shall be."

"Well, that's fairly spoken, for bethune us now there ought to be no saycrecy; ye know me book, an' I think I know yers."

The young man interrupted the agent, saying, "It's simple enough, Mr. Flynn: my game is,—Coin, money at any price."

"Say notes insthid, and ableege me, sir," whined Brien.

"Anything of value will suffice for my purpose."

"Good! from yer littthers I understhand yer father wor me lord's brother."

The pale young man winced somewhat as he replied, "Pray do not go into that."

"Misther Darecoort, I only seek to make the road plain and riddy bethune us. Whativer I say, ye'll find I'll always thrate ye as me shuparyor, for shure arn't ye a rayl gintleman?"

"I ought to be one," was dejectedly volunteered.

"So ye are, an' plinty av money ye'll hav' to keep up yer proper stashin."

The young man began to look brighter as the speaker continued,—

"Well, thin, I know that ye are me lord's

nephey, bud how is id ye niver met yer couzin Misther Vincint ? ”

“ Because I was born abroad, and only came to England when I first heard of and wrote to you, with what result you are already aware. Indeed, none of my friends know where I am at this moment.”

“ I dare say,” was drily answered ; “ bud may I ax, Misther Darecoort, how kem ye to be where ye are at this minnit ? ”

“ You mean in this odd apartment, I presume ? ”

“ Yis, an’ I mayne in that other place beyant,” indicating the press.

“ ’Tis readily told,” responded the young man : “ when I arrived in Dublin, I could not find you at the lawyer’s, who advised me, if I wished to see you particularly, to take the Malahide road, where I would be certain of meeting you. Well, I walked on until I got near the Castle, when I inquired of a well-built, handsome young fellow, how I could see Mr. Flynn, and very politely he

brought me to the door, whence the servant showed me into your room."

Eagerly the agent interrogated,—

"War he dressed in a dark blue shuited?"

"Yes."

"Short jacket?"

"Yes."

"And shmoked a sthange lookin' pipe?"

"He did."

"Thin that wor yer couzin Mither Vincint?"

"Indeed! how odd!"

"Ha! I'm forgettin' tho'," proceeded the deputy: "how did ye git into that press?"

"Being of a restless, inquiring mind," was candidly replied, "after waiting for you a considerable time, I strolled into a gallery out of the room; hearing footsteps, I retreated into a niche in the wall, which opened at the back, leading to this

apartment. Only try, and you will see the recess wherein I stood revolves, bringing you to the passage I came through."

"The gallery," said Brien Flynn, "ye sphake av is the sthrong room, where the family papers, charthers, an' valewbils are kep; av I'd known there wor a passige from id to this place, 'twould hav' saved me many a journey; howiver, there's luck in meetin' ye,—alrid dy ye've found out more nor I larn'd, an' who knows what's goin' to follow?"

"It may be even as you say," was quietly spoken by his auditor.

"What a sthrange thing!" the former mused; "up to an hour ago, there wor not a sowl in the world held me saycrit: ye see the work av years."

"Come," exclaimed Mr. Dorrington Darecourt decisively, approaching the agent, "it is time we understood each other. I intend to be outspoken with you."

His listener rose up excitedly.

“I know all you have to say, and all you intend to do; now with this knowledge in my possession, and prepared if necessary to act upon it,”—the miser dropped into his seat with visible agitation,—“are we to be true friends in everything? Answer, Yes or No.”

“Yis,” was faltered in reply.

“Shake hands upon it.” Dorrington extended his hand.

“I niver shake hands wid me shuparyors.”

The deputy looked upon the floor.

“Bah!” was retorted derisively, “we cannot be one in this transaction and two outside of it.”

“Thin be id as ye say, Misther Darecoort.”

“You’ll find no half-measures with me, Mr. Flynn; for weal or woe, we are now linked together, and at the first false step on either side, let the right man strike home.”

“I don’t understhand ye, sir; ye see, not bein’ edicated, me hed is aizely moidhered.”

“Ha, ha!” laughed the young man, adding coldly, “You are either d——d clever or the people about here are confounded fools, else how did you climb to this post?”

“I oftin wish I wor niver timptid beyant me nathural stashin anyhow.”

There was no doubting the bitter sincerity of these words, and so the listener thought as he responded,—

“I believe you; this, however, is not the time to indulge in maudlin sentiment. If you do not move with me, I’ll split to my uncle and upset you, but if we hold on to our true colours, we can make our fortunes, and I, I may become——”

“What?” inquired the agent nervously.

“What! why, Lord Darecourt, of course.”

“Oh, moighty sthars, ye’r not sarious?” was echoed.

“Serious, why not? Just now you spoke

of putting my cousin out of the way! Agreed! but have I no better right to the cause than you, when his death means my inheritance and prosperity? Yes," he continued with warmth, "my supercilious uncle allowed me to be brought up in poverty after my father perished poor and unknown, in a foreign land; since I can remember I have vowed revenge for the unnatural deed; and somehow, my new friend, if I ever doubted of success, it is gone now, for, with your aid, the shelter of this room, and that chest of gold——"

"No, no, not the goold, not the goold," pleaded the miser.

"Any form of money will answer for my triumph," was peevishly retorted; "but come, Mr. Flynn, when do we start?"

"Where for, sir?"

"For the field of business—I mean action."

All the spirit of individualism had

forsaken the agent, and he now sat the essence of meekness, although a strange light flickered in his cunning eye.

“Wheniver ye plaze, Misther Darecourt.”

“Good ! you will follow me in all things ? ”

“Yis, sir.”

“I shall well repay your services.”

“Thank ye, sir.”

“And you will help me to gain possession of the title and belongings of the Darecourts of Darecourt ? ”

“I will, sir.”

“Then, swear it.”

“I cannot, sir.”

“Oh yes, you can. I came provided, for I mean to accomplish what I state. Do you swear you will be true to your promises ? ”

“I will to-morrow : don’t ax me to-day, Misther Dorrington.”

A rapid smile illumined the younger

man's face as he resumed,—“Very well, be it so.”

Brien Flynn felt reassured.

“Now we understhand ayché other par-
fictly, Mr. Dorrington.”

“Then let us begin to move.”

“How, sir?”

“You say the gallery I went into out of
your room holds all the proprietary docu-
ments of the Darecourt family?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Did you ever see any papers referring
to the marriage of the late Lady Dare-
court?”

“I'm not shure.”

“Come now, think, please; honesty, re-
member, is our only chance of success.”

“I belayve I did, although I'm not
sartin.”

“We will remain here until you can
satisfy me.”

“Thin I may say as how I did—that is,
I did,” was answered in a reluctant tone.

“Very good,” earnestly followed from the young man, adding, “You could easily put your hand upon them, I suppose?”

“Yis, sir, I think I cud.”

“That’s better,” said the former, with an innocent look; “and you say they are in the gallery I passed through in coming here?”

“Yis, Misther Dorrington.”

“Then bring them to me,” was sternly demanded.

“Oh, Misther Darecoort! not now, shurely?”

“Yes, now or never.”

The deputy tremblingly hesitated, when, jumping to his feet, his companion peremptorily shouted,—

“Hand me the key of that chest of gold!”

The palsied miser felt there was no mistaking the man he had now to deal with as the latter continued,—

“Out with the key at once, or I’ll——“

Before the sentence was finished, the agent meekly put the key on the table, sinking on his knees as he supplicated,—

“Ye sed as how ye’d take id in any form av money, bud not the goold!”

“Yes, and I will adhere to my word; bring me those documents, and keep your gold.”

The pleader moved to the door.

“No,” interrupted his visitor, “go the way I came: it is, as you say, nearest,” indicating the recess wherein he, the speaker, had first appeared.

Brien Flynn found it revolved, and entering it, he was instantly on the outer passage.

Quickly the young man let fall a bolt, securing the movable structure as he said triumphantly, “You are checkmated; this door is fastened, the spring at the other end of the passage only opens from the outside, you may linger where you are without a chance of discovery, while I can

leisurely remove this treasure as I wish. Now hear my terms: the key is no security, I will give it back; nor need I touch the gold; the parchments, too, will answer at another time; but you return and swear on this sacred book to help me in becoming Lord of Darecourt, or you shall miserably perish."

Where the prayers of the just were wont to ascend in the days gone by, these two men, betrothed in infamy, now kneel and ratify their unlawful vow.

CHAPTER X.

WENTWORTH WASTE, stretching away westward towards Donabate, was widely known as the scene of the brutal murder of the last Earl of Wentworth, when returning from a late debate in the Irish House of Lords, political rancour being universally assigned as the motive for his assassination.

Since this sanguinary event the Waste had been studiously avoided, and, though affording a short path to the town, people preferred to continue by the high road, involving a longer distance of some two miles.

Abandoned to solitude, loneliness, and disorder, its fertile soil soon became over-

grown with a rank vegetation, spreading out in all directions. By a Cain-like sin this place was cursed and ominously shunned, yet here the lamp of Faith once shed its assuring light, and the gable of the stone-roofed abbey still remained, though the roof itself was long since broken and gone. It had never been an extensive or imposing building, as so many of the ecclesiastical ruins in Ireland still prove, even in their dust ; but from its elevated situation it commanded an exhaustive view of the surrounding country on every side.

Before the assassination of Lord Wentworth, people were in the habit of frequenting the sacred ruins, mingling their hearty, untutored prayers with the endless stream of thanksgiving ever going heavenwards ; and truly it was a fit place to sober wilful man. In the space formed by the angles of the building were the remains of a churchyard, long, long since disused, and

left to share the fate of the refectory adjoining.

Throughout its whole extent there was not a fashioned headstone or even the remains of one, yet every slight eminence above the level indicated the last resting-place of one or more of the children of nature, while a rugged, any-sized piece of granite was stamped into the ground, marking the head of each grave, except where the remains of a wooden cross forbade the unnecessary rocky addition. On a summer evening, when the setting sun had dipped below the horizon in its resplendent glory, it was a fair sight to watch the villagers talking, smoking, or knitting, while their children gambolled in youthful ardour, or tended the scanty flocks basking in the luxurious greensward adjoining that greener hill, on the apex of which the ruins stood.

All this is now changed, most of those actors on life's fitful stage have played out their parts, and others have succeeded to

their places. Even of those still lingering in this valley of time, none will now go near the unhallowed spot, and the night-fiends of that lonely Wentworth Waste hold undisputed sway over its blood-stained, dishonoured heath.

A place stamped as anti-human, and avoided by all, was a meet resort for the evil-minded, and here accordingly Dorrington Darecourt frequently found himself with his confederate Brien Flynn.

Free and unreserved, from the conviction of being alone, they soon arrived at the conclusion that their interests and intentions were one, and so they appeared to be, but it was a superficial view, at heart each deeply mistrusted the other.

The younger man was clearly master of the situation, and indeed this was but the natural sequence of the cool, authoritative air he invariably assumed towards the deputy. Leaning against the faded, time-decayed portal of the ruin, Dor-

rington leisurely smoked a foreign, sweet-scented cigar, while with his walking-cane he tossed a human bone idly about, now backwards, now forwards.

The agent dare not express his natural feeling of dislike, but kept his head away from the disagreeable sight, sitting at a respectful distance, waiting rather to answer than to inquire anything.

The former listlessly uttered,—

“Some poor devil once would have missed this atom; now out of the whole world there’s not one to own it; nay, the earth itself rejects it, else why disgorge this, and retain others?”

Again the osseous segment was disported in the air.

“Ah, sir, don’t; ye giv me a megrum lookin’ at ye; do put id aside.”

The young man smiled as he replied,—

“Perhaps you are right after all; who can tell what mind may have been enshrined within the creature of whom this

was a member, or what achievements may not have, even indirectly, grown out of the body whereof it formed a constituent part ? ”

The speaker took the bone in his hand, continuing,—

“ Methinks the earth could hardly set thee free, and still hold captive the spirit hid in the casement of which thou wert a segment : but come, thou hast served my purpose of brief thought,—hence ! go where other skeleton offals will keep thee company.”

And lifting the long residuum of bygone manhood, he cast it into the ruins, wherefrom a slight scream immediately followed. The agent at once rose up alarmed ; but his companion had already gone in quest of the source of their sudden surprise. At the rear of the ruins, standing in trepidation, was a young lady, on seeing whom Dorrington politely raised his hat saying, in a courteous, easy voice,——

“ I sincerely trust that I have not been the cause of your alarm ? ”

“ Thank you, sir, it is not serious——” hesitating. “ I wandered to this place from curiosity, not thinking of meeting any one, and just now something dropped at my feet, causing me to feel a little frightened.”

He laughed lightly, continuing in an apologetic tone,—

“ I am the delinquent, as I flung that ‘ something ’ in this direction ; not, I assure you ” (and he looked earnestly at her), “ contemplating so unfortunate a result.”

Throughout Dorrington spoke with uncovered head, and a possessed, gentlemanly bearing.

“ I am much obliged, sir, for your consideration in so trifling a matter, and I wish you good morning,” responded the young lady.

“ I hope ye’re quite well, Miss Fanny ? ”

said the agent, emerging from behind the ruins.

“ Oh, yes, thank you, Flynn, this gentleman——”

“ ’Tis Misther Darecoort, miss,” interrupted Brien.

Dorrington afterwards recollected the colour warmly tinging her face on hearing these words.

“ Mr. Darecourt, son of Lord Darecourt ? ” she inquired eagerly.

“ Yes,” answered Dorrington, bowing.

“ Excuse my seeming curiosity,” she continued ; “ my surprise was to find any one in this place ; it has such a hard, cruel reputation, and I shall be glad to leave it.”

“ I know but little of the place or its antecedents—nor as a rule do I incline much to popular prejudice—but its loneliness is a great charm to me.”

At that instant a heavy raindrop caused them to look up, when the deputy said,—

“ ’Tis a sthorm, Miss Fanny ; I knew id wor hangin’ about all the mornin’ be me poor corns. Ha ! there it goes,” as a flash of lightning was followed by its attendant thunder, “ com, miss, the only shelter is the ould ruins,” whither all three immediately betook themselves.

And truly it was a storm : an almost incredible change o’er the visage of nature, and so sudden.

Seaward the sky was one huge black canopy of darkest night, obscuring the neighbouring hills ; indeed, nothing was recognizable, so effectually and quickly did this pall of concealment settle down on everything ; even beside you the ebony shadow was seemingly real and startlingly abrupt. Down came the tempest of rain, while the searching lurid flashes careered in wild dismay, reaching the furthestmost recesses in the ruin. Louder and yet more loud arose that rolling murmur of colliding elements, relieved only (if relief

it were) by the sound of the clanging surf raging upon the distant shore.

Fanny Chalmers, for it was she, was greatly alarmed, but, heedless of her refusals, Mr. Darecourt divested himself of his outer coat to protect her from the rain falling through that roofless, ruined record of time.

Not many minutes had elapsed while these persons remained together ere they felt a chord of mutual interest awakening within them, and indeed this was reflected from their tell-tale eyes.

Brien Flynn's face assumed a slight hectic tinge of interest, and from time to time he looked towards the hills opposite, watching for the break in the storm.

It came at last, as suddenly passing away as had been its advent. Joyous nature shook off its dewy mantle and beamed forth, renewed and reinvigorated by the contest with its late tempestuous assailant.

Gracefully returning the timely covering, Miss Chalmers feelingly said,—

“I shall always recollect the kindness shown me by you, Mr. Darecourt.”

To which he warmly responded,—

“And I can never forget even so brief an interval of happiness, although I have not the pleasure of knowing to whom such trifling services were rendered.”

“Fanny Chalmers of Fairlea,” and she turned to depart.

The agent swiftly whispered in the young man’s ear,—

“I’ll keep her company to the high road; stay till I com back. Good-bye, sir,” he added aloud, in a make-believe voice, “good-bye, Misther Vincent,” and he followed the retreating female form in the distance.

“How strange!” mused Dorrington Darecourt, regarding them both. “Yesterday I heard her name for the first time, when Flynn said she was the only girl in

the country whose family could and would join in my venture for their private ends, yet to-day it seems as though already our future were intermixed in some realistic fashion, though I cannot fathom the mystery without Flynn's help ; so here goes, another weed and another think about you, Fanny Chalmers."

Turning to look for a seat, a figure noiselessly issued from the ruins and stood confronting him. It was that of an immensely powerful square-built man, with sandalled feet, an enormous head of hair, and beard reaching to his waist, almost concealing his tanned face. A coarse faded blue suit, narrow-crowned hat ; and in his hand a heavy knotted stick, his waist encircled by a thick leathern belt, in which were placed a brace of pistols, a hunting-knife, and a drinking-horn. Of such formidable proportions, he yet spoke in a hushed, low voice, taking no notice

of the start his appearance caused to his astonished observer.

“ You are Vincent Darecourt ? ”

“ So Brien Flynn said.”

“ Then you know Eustace Dillon ? ”

“ Yes. I—I——”

“ That will suffice. This particular paper is entrusted to you for him.”

“ By whom ? ” was asked in blank wonder.

“ Michael O’Grady, the outlaw,” saying which the strange man cleared the hedge in front and was lost to view.

CHAPTER XI.

LORD DARECOURT'S nephew and the agent, paced slowly backwards and forwards in a very secluded part of the large estate, the former with a light, jaunty air, while the latter hung his head and seemed unusually reserved ; this portion of the Darecourt property approximated to the sea-shore, and in winter became the resort of numberless members of the feathery genus who in hard weather betake themselves inland.

As these two confederates walked up and down they glanced covert looks of a half-slumbering suspicion at each other, betokening mistrust, although, of the two, Dorrington was least sceptical, that furtive

hasty gleam of concern from the agent vividly bespeaking a mind ill at ease.

“Ye say she is fitted wid everything,” proceeded the latter.

“You mean the boat, I presume?” was replied.

“Av coorse I do, sir.”

“Then she is.”

“Guns, powder, shot, an’ oars?”

“Yes, all are ready.”

“That’s right.”

“But it’s the fourth or fifth time you have repeated these questions,” remonstrated the younger one.

“An’ av it wor the hundredth time, what matther, sir? I’m only anxious there’ll be no mishtake.”

“There shall be none. If my cousin wishes to make away with himself, he will have ready means whereby to gratify his taste. But, Flynn, you exhibit a concern in the result that I am insensible to.”

“Thruë, for ye, sir, I am consarned till

id's all over. Whin sthartin' the bysiness I had no iday 'twould com' to this."

"To what?" demanded his auditor.

"Why, to our disgrace an' his death, for both it will be."

"Do not indulge in these gloomy forebodings. Think that I shall be Lord Darecourt, and you, my friend and agent."

"Niver, sir," was answered by the agent, with a remarkable severity of voice.

"And why not, may I inquire?"

"Bekayze, Misther Dorrington, me grate hope is to finish this deed an' eskaype to some furinn land, where unknown I'd linger till the day coms when I'll shlide out av this world to—to—niver mind where—any place 'll be too good."

"You under-estimate yourself, Flynn. So far as I am concerned, there shall be but one consideration. If we succeed, we must share the gain; otherwise, why remain on as you are. I will not interfere with you."

“Not now, sir; ’tis too late. The scint av the goold is in me blood, an’ I want to grip id. No matther av id inds in murther, only let id be don quickly.”

“How will it affect you if my cousin does not follow your advice?”

“Bud he tould me this mornin’ as how he’d like to shoot an the rocks, av coorse I sed he nivir had an iday av the foine sphort it wor. Ha! ha! ha!”

“What if he can swim, Flynn?”

“I thought av that, sir, an’ axed him. ‘No,’ sez he, ‘I can’t put wan foot afore another in the wather.’ Indade, he wint an till I found out he couldn’t even hould an oar, so thinks I, that’ll do.”

“But how can he impel that boat, or why have the oars in her at this moment?” was inquired.

“A make-belayve, Misther Dorrington. I assure ye av he wint widout thim ’twould seem kewrious. Sez I, ‘Ye’ve only to let

her dhrift along av her own account ; she'll throt ye there an' back.' "

His companion smiled as he observed,—

“Harmless advice certainly.”

“To the innishint all things are innishint.”

A feeble leer followed this attempted witticism of the agent.

“How shall we know the coveted results ? ” the young man interrupted.

“Be remainin' where we are. Jist hide away a thrifle, while I'm houldin parley. Whin he stharts we'll giv him the binifit av our attintive eyesight, till the consayt is takin out av him this side av the grave.”

“Flynn, who is that walking along so leisurely on the road opposite ? ” pointing to the figure indicated.

“Let me see,” answered the deputy ;
“'tis Miss Chalmers av Fairlea. Now that ye've put id in me head, av ye cud git an the right side av her ye'd do well.”

“Why so ? ” was inquired.

‘Bekayze her ould father is a notorious lawyer, an’ she an’ he id both go to a sartin place for grandheur. Another thing, she’s intimate wid all the high families, an’ ’twould be no throuble to her to git hould av what’s nicessary to shut up our inimies.’”

“To whom do you allude?” inquired Lord Darecourt’s nephew.

“That cub Dillon, av coorse,” was fiercely replied.

“There could be no necessity, Flynn; with the death of my cousin my position becomes an absolute fact.”

“There’s many a shlip ’twixt the cup an’ the lip, Misther Dorrington. That Dillon sees farther nor most av us.”

“Oh! this is childish; you must have another and a deeper reason for enmity towards this person.”

“I hav, he wanst had me down, an’ sthruck me; an’ I vow id won’t be long afore I pay him aff wid tinfold intherisht,

till I blast him an' his beyant the chance av recovery."

The declaimer turned suddenly and resumed his perturbed walk, while his companion looked on vacantly. A shot in the woods now agitated them.

"Quick, Misther Dorrington!" said Flynn; "hide; that's him," motioning whence the sound proceeded. "Ye'll hear what passes bethune us. When he's gon we'll give him our blessin' an his long journey."

"Here goes, then. His father allowed mine to die in need. When I see his son dying for want of assistance, kindred in its necessity if not in form, I will be content." Whereupon Dorrington Darecourt disappeared in the copious wild surroundings as his cousin came in sight.

"Ah! is that you?" said the young heir of Darecourt, pleasantly approaching Brien Flynn.

“Troth id is. Bud had yer honour any luck?”

“Not much; the birds are timid on the wing to-day.”

“See, sir, the coveys an the sands yandher, followin’ the toide.”

“Oh, yes! yes!”

“Well, sir, at slack wather, which ’tis fast comin’ to, they’ll be there in cart-loads, jist beyant thim black rocks,” moving his finger seawards.

“Indeed! But observe,” interrupted the heir, “what strange dark bird is that flying so curiously and so low? Why, it is now settling on these very rocks you pointed to.”

“A kormorant, sir; foine shootin’, an ye’ll see widgin, divers, an’ wild duck as well.”

“How I wish I could get there!” uttered Vincent Darecourt with enthusiasm.

“Well, as I tould yer honour afore, ye’ve only to sit aizey in the boat; the

current'll carry ye down wid the lasth quarther, which id now is, an' bring ye back an the first av the flood."

"Unfortunately I have no ammunition large enough," was answered in accents of regret.

"Oh ! that same's soon don ; there's the boat riddy sthocked, for I had a notion yer honour moight wish for the thrue sphort."

"Thank you ; it is very thoughtful, and I will gladly avail myself of the chance."

The agent bit his lip as he answered,—

"'Tis no praze, sir, I need, for wouldn't I do more nor that for me lord's son ?"

Declining the latter's company but repeating his thanks, Vincent Darecourt went downward ; bounding over the dwarfed foliage and the open sandbank which succeeded, he speedily made his way to the small lake, where the boat floated with everything in its proper place. Nimbly

casting off the painter, the light open skiff crept gently along in the falling tide, gliding towards the breakwater, whither the current tended. Meanwhile the deputy and his confederate stood concealed behind the brushwood, eagerly noting each move of their predestined victim. Brien looked terribly anxious and preoccupied; the other leisurely produced the accustomed weed, finding a solace in its soothing effects.

After a continuance for some time of this silent observation, the young man inquired,—

“ Why are you so thoughtful, Flynn ? ”

“ Arrah, why not, sir, see the diffirence that little boat ’ll make to me.”

“ And to me,” interposed the expectant heir, “ but it’s all over with him now. You may wind up his day-book any moment. Here, tell me more about that, —what is it you call her ? ”

“ Chalmers, sir. What I sed is thrue,

bud another time 'll do for that; let's hav this job don clane an' complayte afore we begin somethin fresh."

"It is positively amusing to see you so excited, when you must know he is fast drifting to his last quarters."

"I'll not make shure, sir, till id's over, so many sthrange things turn up ginerally at the wrong time, so jist kindly let me hav me own way for a few minnits, thin I'll be a new man."

"Be it so, my zealous friend," answered his companion, blowing a thin cloud, adding, "why, assuredly my sporting cox has an oar in hand, though you said he could not row."

"So he tould me, sir. Bad luck to me misforthin ! can it be he wor foolin' me? oh murther!" letting fall his hands dejectedly. Almost instantly he seized his neighbour, exclaiming, "He can't row ividently, the pace is too slow, an' he thought as how he'd thry. Bud see, hurrah! hurrah! he's

put the oars away ! ” rubbing his palms gleefully.

“ A splendid shot certainly ! ” was affirmatively uttered by the younger man, as the occupant of the boat brought down a wild duck quite sixty yards distant.

The maimed bird fell heavily into the placid sea, upon which the sportsman made herculean efforts to reach it. With a single oar in hand, standing towards the stern, he alternately indulged in splashing efforts on each side of the boat. The spectacle was ludicrous to those who could handle a scull, but it sufficed, however, and after rude prodigious labours at the expense of breath and muscle, the skiff lurched from under the protection of the break-water into the open sea, when the wounded fowl duly became a captive. There was a look of admiration about the agent’s companion, which he did not attempt to repress, as he watched the slovenly exploit,

although not an atom of fellow-feeling or pity was in that dissolute face.

But Brien Flynn was wholly beside himself, not a feature moved, nor did he seem to breathe, so fixed was the glare in his ashy countenance.

“Who is that elegant horsewoman ambling on the sands, Flynn ?” inquired Dorrington Darecourt.

Scarcely deigning to turn, the deputy answered in a hard, resonant voice,—

“The bravest, finest leddy in Ireland ; bud look,” he shouted, “see, see, now we hav him, he’s in the full shwing av the toide at lasth, that’s what I’ve bin watchin. Hurrah, we’re near the mark. See how the boat shoots along, stiddy there she goes, nothin’ though to the shwim she’ll hav in a minnit, ha ! ha ! ha !” swaying about in frenzied delight, his greedy eyes glowing with demoniacal fire, while his companion, though manifestly deeply absorbed, neither moved nor spoke. And of a truth

the trim craft sped lightly and swiftly along, to the growing concern of the heir of Darecourt, who, feeling alarmed at the increasing pace, vainly plied the powerless oar on either side, as he had done before, but it was of no avail in that pent-up sea.

The full tide stretched far up into the beautiful estuary, but declining and coming to its lowest level, it fell slowly and steadily therefrom, impinging upon the side of the long breakwater which restrained and thwarted its natural course. Under this shelter the sea was calm and languid in its onward flow, but as the tide waned lower, beyond its rocky protecting influence the current shot out with violent increasing rapidity, its whole force converging towards the furthestmost point of that sheltering barrier, which it rounded with irresistible power, exhausting its energies in the wide waters of Dublin Bay. The abortive struggle of Vincent Darecourt

to restrain the skiff was cruel sport for his two observers.

“Bah !” muttered the Darecourt agent, “sit down an’ make yer mind up. Ye caught me, be the throat, ye did, and soon the conger and crab ’ll munch yer’s. See, at lasth he’s in the thick av the current. Oh, ye fool, av ye’d only let her alon she moight weather the bank hersel’. Bad luck to the chance, or av ye jist tilt her aff whin she touches, ye’d be safe in the open ocean beyant ; an’ who wouldn’t be afther sarchin’ from Lambay to the Isle av Man for the heir av Darecoort. Bud, hurrah, hurrah, jist as I guessed, he’s sthugglin in the boat wid her hed down in the wather, an sthills he’s jumpin’ from side to side. Bravo, bravo, now she’s shwingin’ for the pint. Bang, she’s over ! Dhrown, heir av Darecoort, an’ ye, me young lord, liv to be happy.”

Dorrington Darecourt moved not, irresistibly he thought, “What is the worth of

this fellow's felicitations, one gone, and so soon another," but suddenly their eyes are fixed on that giddy flight of rider and horse towards the granite wall.

"Why, it's the bravest, finest lady in Ireland," observed the recently acclaimed heir of Darecourt.

"Yis, my curse an her," hissed Brien, "she'd risk her life to save any wan's; bud here I'll sthop her gallop."

He raised the gun left on the spot by its late owner, pointing it at the flying steed. However, the flint missed fire, and, muttering a deep imprecation, he dropped it, adding,—

"What matther! See, there goes the boat bottom upwards, an' where is he? nowhere, ha! ha! ha!"

As Vincent Darecourt was sinking for the last time, his strained, wild, hopeless glance drank in the sight of two figures in the distance, one of whom stood gleefully gesticulating towards him, while nearer at

the end of the breakwater a female form rising from her struggling horse, and plunging into the waves, imperiously smote them aside in her onward career of impulsive devotion.

CHAPTER XII.

SOME years ago, before the period of which we now write, Michael O'Grady, Esq., was bracketed B.A. at old Trinity, and soon after left the Alma Mater to essay his future as a lawyer in the then wealthy, class-divided city of Dublin.

O'Grady's enormous physical proportions were in keeping with his heart, often naïvely said to be "as big as a bullock's," and although there were none of the ephemeral qualities of worldly grace or superficial embellishment about him, nature was well represented in its truest form by that ponderous man, at once honest, educated, and humane, and with this disposition in

the adolescent period of life, need it be affirmed he was widely known and esteemed. The student was very fond of a spree, minus those broad, coarse, sottish characteristics too often disfiguring mankind, mentally and physically ; but one where the lighter vein within sought free scope in a friendly, quick-witted repartee, and where for a short hour those like himself abandoned the realities of life, finding repose in forgetting them.

He was a copious debater, earnest and eloquent in speech, but above all revelling in the facility wherewith he disconcerted his wordy antagonists, rapidly returning their specious utterances, adroitly distorted to a different meaning to that which they were manifestly intended to convey. Before leaving "Trinity," some of its kindred spirits had established a private club, called the "Night Rovers," under his inspiration, and so select and *recherché* did it speedily become, that it was considered

no small distinction to gain enrolment amongst the *élite* of its membership.

His home was at Glenwood, Artane, and though not of the national religion, his greatest friends were to be reckoned among that numerous body of his countrymen, the village pastor figuring foremost in the ranks of his chief intimates.

Ireland at the time being on the eve of a civil war, that most unrighteous of all contests, it was very hard, if not impossible, to withstand the temptation to range yourself on one side or other of the belligerents, at all events in sympathy, if not in a more active form.

Following the public bent, the "Night Rovers" fast drifted from their avowed character of being non-political, degenerating into two hostile camps, wherein the national party were numerically much inferior to the opposite faction, but immeasurably their superiors mentally and physically.

Deprecatingly and regretfully O'Grady beheld this retrocession of the vessel he had created and piloted to the anchor of an impartial, generous neutrality, in the end wholly absenting himself from his one favourite resort, sooner than become identified with either side of malcontents, esteeming it to be the safest course, as indubitably the masterly didactic arguments of the nationalists were permeating through his open unprejudiced nature.

At this juncture we find him, one cold, wretched day, standing outside the front gates of his ancestral home, when a poor old man accosted him. His ready ten-penny-piece was as usual available ; but to his surprise, the old man thankfully declined it, saying,—

“ God bless ye, sir ! ’Tis not money I want, bud work.”

“ What? work!” was exclaimed in surprise, “ surely whoever has hitherto

employed you will not now let you seek work elsewhere, or what is more just, allow you to labour at all."

"Ah! sir," answered his emaciated listener, "'tis not long I'll be behouldin' to any wan, me heart is bruck!" and burying his face in his white, transparent bony hands, he reclined against the gatepost.

Without speaking another word, O'Grady took the unresisting, sobbing man to a seat close by, intuitively feeling there was something unusual in his bereft, decrepid condition. After a painful suspense he said soothingly,—

"Come, my friend, it will do no good to give way to grief: have courage—tell me the cause of your trouble, and depend on my assistance as far as possible."

"Ye little know me throuble," was responded with vehemence, "this mornin' I had a home, now I'm roofless, an'—

an'——" he broke down with grief that would not be denied, adding through his sobs, " Me wife sits be the roadside, too ill to move, even the old pigs-sthye we built wor thrown down sooner nor let her lie in it."

" Oh, heavens!" passionately exclaimed his visitor. " Answer quickly, who did this damnable deed?"

" The agint, sir."

" Whose agent?"

" Sir Marvyn Marvyn's, sir."

" Mr. Arkwright is a friend of mine, it cannot be him!"

" He's agint for Sir Marvyn Marvyn," said the old man bitterly.

" So he is; but tell me more of your case—there must be an error somewhere."

" Ah, sir, I wish there wor," and he feebly smiled, adding, " ye'll soon judge for yersel'."

" That is what I wish to do," his observer replied.

“ Well, sir, to begin. ’Tis years ago since I bekem tinnint av the stubble mountain land av Dangan.”

“ Which I know very well,” interposed O’Grady.

“ Yis, av coorse, sir, so ye wud. Well there wor nine acres in all; afther me day’s hard work, or afore I stharterd in the mornin’, I’d do all I cud to turn id over, pick the loads av sthones, and gid id riddy for tillage, bit be bit. I succeeded till I had me first crap, which gav’ me grate pluck, an’ from wan thing to another, I got an till I built a shlate house, mind ye, not a mud cabbín, got a shmart, useful, pony, a heifer, an’ haf-a-dozen bonneens, altogeth’er makin’ five out av the nine acres fit for the sphade. Thin the rint wor nearly doubled, so as I cudn’t help id I had the diskreshun to hould me tongue. At this time the Lord blessed us wid a welkem little sthranger, an’ poor Biddy felt the happiest woman in the world at

havin' wan child at lasth. Things wint an smilin' an' I war beginnin' to look out for 'Biddy' (that's the name the colleen got, sir, and warn't id nathural, seein' as how her mother wor called so afore her?) whin the hard times sit in an us. Ah ! shure, there id is, afore me eyes at this very minnit," and he stretched out his hands, while his voice grew quicker and louder. " There wor the black night an us agin in throth, the smell av that horrible blight, ay tin in at the alriddy wake thubers, med us sick in mind an' body, knowin' too well as how id spelt ruin and starvashun ; ye may depind, sir, as I got up day afther day to see the increasin sthruggle, me mind began to giv way ; at lasth the poor ould pony had to go, an' id didn't take long till the rest followed shute, for behould ye, I wor puncthual wid the rint, knowin' av I didn't we'd be left widout a roof to shelther us.

" In sphite av all, me poor wife an'

daughter niver give way, at laste so far as I cud see, bud used to say to me, ' God'll bless yer labours in His own time,' so I thried to say me prayers rigularly. Well, thin, sir, afther going through all this an' beginning to recover like, me poor child Biddy tuck ill, an'—an'——" again there was a paroxysm of tears, when his attentive and sympathetic listener said,—

" I would not allow you to proceed with this dismal recital, except for my wish to befriend you."

" Thank ye, sir, the ind isn't far aff. Me poor girl died, things wint to the bad, an' I losth heart intirely, havin' no money, after berryin' her daysintly, to go an wid. The first year's rint I iver owed now kem dhue, an' the agint, Misther Arkwright, sed he must hav the money. I tould him how I wor situatid, bud he sed as how id wor no affair av his, he shud do his ordhers from t'other masther. He sarved me wid a jickmint. Me wife's health gev way at

this, an' I put all me wits to work to rowl in a good harvisth, pay me way, an' git Biddy an her legs agin as I tould the agint from time to time; but it plazed God for poor Biddy to git worse insthid av bettther, an' at lasth I walked in to Marcer's Hospital this mornin' for advice—no small journey, sir, at me years—whin, what d'ye think? ”—as, rising from the seat, he puts his face close to his anxious listener's ear—“ gittin' home, sir, I tuck a short cut, an' comin' out suddinly at the usual place, I saw——”

“ What? Quick, man!” exclaimed O'Grady.

“ The home I bilt barred an' boulted—the sheds at the back thrown down, me bits av furnishure lyin' about in all directions, an' me poor wife thryin' to sit up agin the door posth, where wan av the naybours—God bliss thim!—propped her up wid a pillow.”

The withered speaker now utterly

exhausted, though tearless, sank heavily into his seat.

The young man almost forced the blood through his compressed lips brooding over the painful narrative. Suddenly collecting himself, he energetically said,—

“This shall not be allowed. Come with me to the agent at once.”

“’Tis kind av ye, sir; but ’tis no use,” responded the subject of his pity, shaking his head mournfully.

Commending the latter to the apt solicitude of the servants, who already began to place a comfortable meal before that instance of outraged humanity, O’Grady hastily assumed his hat, and, with his large thinking eyes fixed on the fast-retreating earth, hurried to the outer gate; issuing therefrom, his path was momentarily arrested by a crowd moving towards Dublin, and on nearing a bystander he inquired,—

“What is the matter?”

“ 'Tis poor Bob Doyle's dead wife,” was answered.

“ The cause of her death must have been unusual, I suppose ? ” the inquirer observed innocently.

“ Unusual !—not very,” was retorted with marked derision as the voice continued,—“ While her husband went to Marcer's Hospital this mornin' they turned her out av house an' home, though they knew she wor dyin' ; but now, thank God, she's gon where there's no agints.”

With the vital fluid heaving in his hot veins, O'Grady was beside himself until he stood face to face with his acquaintance, Robert Arkwright, Sir Mervyn Mervyn's deputy, for was not the husband of that dead woman now waiting his return in his father's house ?

“ Hilloa ! what's amiss ? ” exclaimed Arkwright in a tone of wonder as the excited face of the former was suddenly revealed.

“You evicted a woman from Dangan this morning?”

“I did,” was calmly answered.

“Did you know the unfortunate creature was dying?”

“My dear fellow,” followed in a bantering tone, “if we gave credence to all we hear, our business would tumble to pieces.”

“The eviction was for rent?”

“It was.”

“A year’s?”

“Yes, but it is drifting into another half year’s.” The agent became somewhat displeased as he continued coldly, “Really, I do not see——”

However, he was decisively interrupted by the visitor demanding,—

“Did you know there is a large growing crop on the land at this moment?”

“Of course I did.”

“Why not be content to hold it for the rent? Surely it will more than pay you.”

“My orders are from Sir Mervyn Mervyn alone,” was pertinently retorted.

Unmindful of this O’Grady proceeded,—

“‘Cannot you allow the probable value of this crop—over and above the rent due?’”

His auditor laughed boisterously, saying, “Whew—whew, what a Utopian, good-natured idea—ha ! ha ! ha !”

“Then,” was inquired firmly, “am I to understand you decline to aid the evicted, even to any extent?”

“Come, come,” drawled the agent sullenly, “this is going too far. The landlord is travelling goodness knows where at the moment, but if this man sends me a respectful petition, admitting he has been dealt fairly with and soliciting some assistance, I will endorse it, and suggest that he should get a trifle the next time I have an opportunity of communicating with Sir Mervyn.”

“Robert Arkwright,” resumed O’Grady

solemnly, "the husband of that dying, evicted woman came to me, a stranger, for help; and knowing his case, I ask you fairly, what will you do for the sake of honesty and humanity?"

"You've got my answer," was replied with hauteur.

"Am I to accept that as your final resolve?"

"Certainly, I can do no more."

"Not when I tell you that, as I came here, I met the dead body of that wretched woman being carried to undergo the mockery of an inquest, though her still more wretched husband does not yet know of it?" he vehemently rejoined.

"This whole proceeding is more than absurd, and I want to end it!" exclaimed the middleman wrathfully.

"It shall end," was answered in a determined manner.

"I will hear no more," said the former, moving to the door. "We have acted

within the spirit of the law, and, if it be true of that old woman, it is as good to die in one place as another," was added half-smilingly by Arkwright.

Smothering his rising passion, O'Grady went close up to him, saying slowly, "When I go back, that old man will hear your reply, and ask me what he is to do."

"Then by all means tell him," came from the agent in a smooth tripping voice.

"Yes, sir," was replied ; "and I shall advise him to do exactly as I would were I in his position. Do you know what that is ? "

The listener's eye quailed under the glare of fierce, undaunted purpose, yet he attempted to laugh it off, saying it must be something worth knowing.

"What is it, pray ? "

"Blood for blood ! " shouted O'Grady. "You and your master-confederate are the real murderers of that wretched woman,

and I'd hew you both down with as little mercy as was shown to her."

The deputy was neither a small man nor a coward, but he faded into utter nothingness before that giant form waiting the semblance of a chance to annihilate him.

"Why surely," he muttered, "you must be insane, knowing the law protects me."

"Then my curse be upon so unjust a law!" was wrathfully exclaimed, "shielding the wretch who dare not avow as a man the dishonouring deed perpetrated under its ægis."

"I cannot account for this marvellous transition."

The amazed look of the middleman attested the truthfulness of his remark.

"Enough," answered O'Grady in high sounding tones; "we meet no more as friends. You pursue the phantom of a false security built on fraud and legalized infamy, from this hour I am devoted to

one purpose—one honest, unchanging determination. Yes!" he added, with a proud look and heaving chest, "dear, dear Ireland, home of my fathers, become now the home and centre of my only ambition, my only hope, thy independence. Henceforth my every thought shall be thine ; and, oh ! welcome the death that consecrates thy freedom in my blood !"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE all-absorbing topic in the neighbourhood, in the city, indeed far and near, was the gallant rescue of Lord Darecourt's only son and heir by Lucy Neville. Of course, it was generally believed that they were either affianced or related, but when it became authoritatively known that the two actors in this eventful scene (largely heightened by supplementary additions of details, however apocryphal), were positively unknown to each other, the interest in it deepened, while the admiration of the "bould Miss Neville" increased.

Public opinion was in this groove of warm, hearty regard for the young mistress of Nevillstown, when it received a great

shock in the unexpected, much regretted news that the illness thought at first to be a mere cold, consequent upon her abrupt immersion in the sea, and exhausted state when recovered therefrom, had developed into inflammation of the brain of an acute form. The anxiety to hear the last authentic report assumed the semblance of some expected national disaster, whereof the latest bulletin was greedily waited. All of those whom she included amongst her friends were constant in their inquiries, while many a name unknown was inscribed amid the multifarious number filling the call-book, moved thereto by glowing accounts of the intrepid Lucy and her ever-to-be-remembered heroic exploit.

Meanwhile the subject of so much sympathy and engrossing interest lay in her darkened chamber, rolling her restless, wearied head on the moist, yielding pillow.

The fever was one of those wherein the wasting force is long ruthlessly exerted,

and the practised disciple of Esculapius rather hopes for the best than prognosticates the issue, as it were waiting upon the malady—throughout its changeful uncertainties and varying phases.

The result of the frequent professional consultations was, that “much depended on the physical constitution of the patient herself,” and the sapient diagnosis proved correct. After deceiving all by the length of its continuance, the fever slowly abated, finally leaving her, but ah, how changed!

Inert, torpid, and fragile, she lived, yet seemed lifeless. It was a severe struggle, and, though emerging victorious therefrom, the tale of long unconscious suffering was sternly revealed in that apathetic body and pallid, ashy face.

The eyes retained some of their wonted fire, and, unobserved, would richly sparkle in their normal lustre, only however to be succeeded by an utter depletion of physical force. By easy transitions from chair

to chair, she began walking slowly—so slowly—about her bedroom, finally, in a graduated atmosphere, making her way to the outer apartment.

Her condition now became so assured, that little restraint was necessary ; thus we see her roaming the house at will,—at length essaying a transient walk mid the beautiful parterre of roses stretching at her feet.

All reticence and reservation being now past, an attempt was made by her aunt to lead the conversation back to the nearly fatal day on which the accident occurred, but, divining that probably the subject would end in a homely paraphrase, Lucy dexterously avoided it. Gradually she began to know of the interest generally felt in her recovery ; but the absence of two names in the visitors' book occasioned her much thought, namely, Fanny Chalmers and Eustace Dillon.

The former she dismissed with scorn ;

what she had said to Miss Chalmers at their last meeting, recollecting the demand it made upon her pride and its manifest unsuccess in reconciling them, she would have recalled, if she could, as wasted on the saturnine crafty Fanny, but what of the other?

One evening, summoning up unusual courage, she wrote reproaching him with neglect; "although," she thought, "he has a strong motive in whatever he does, strange though his absence may appear."

An hour later on Eustace was ushered in, looking more melancholy than she had ever previously noticed. Taking both her wasted hands, he gazed long, tenderly, and earnestly at her, his eyes softly filling with tears while saying,—

"Oh, Lucy, how old I have grown in the desire to see you, once more to know——"

"Then what kept you away, Mister

Forgetfulness?" she inquired, with a bright, clear smile.

"Kept me away!" he echoed in surprise, "did not Dr. Dease's assistant visit me each day to prevent my coming! Even so late as yesterday he called with your intimation to this effect, which I regretted, but dare not question."

"There is some deep mystery involved in this," she mused; "directly or indirectly. I knew nothing about it, and I am convinced no person in this house was aware of it."

"You amaze me, Lucy; did you not decline to see Mr. Vincent Darecourt ere he went away?"

"I am perfectly innocent of either the wish or its declension. I presume," she added, "this is the gentleman whom I helped to save."

"And whom you did save," rejoined Eustace Dillon emphatically; "if you had not supported him when on the verge of

sinking for the last time, while you yourself held on to the boat, he must undoubtedly have been drowned."

"Come now, Eustace," she said, with an admonishing tone, "you rescued him and myself, but as usual you prefer to attribute the merit to another."

"Upon my honour, this is a mistake. I wish my dear friend Vincent Darecourt were here to verify my statement; it was for this he wished to thank you personally ere returning to England, finally accomplishing it by letter."

"Which I have not received," she decisively answered.

"Oh, Lucy! there is some dreadful deceit. I often wondered why my friend was consigned to absolute incivility, though I had no chance of inquiring into the cause before."

"Eustace, have you made enemies of any one?"

"No, Lucy, none."

"Not even unwittingly?"

“No; and yet—I forgot, there is one, but he is too contemptible to be thought of.”

“Take care, you may underrate the position, there are very few who cannot in some way occasion harm.”

“Well, the person I meant is that hypocritical agent of the Darecourts, Brien Flynn.”

“Yes,” she answered, “I have heard a great deal concerning him, one way or the other, and nothing to his advantage; but may I inquire how you permitted yourself in any sense to be mixed up with this agent, and make him your enemy?”

“I will tell you all; and when I have finished, you must give me the benefit of your far-seeing counsel upon the whole case.”

Eustace Dillon lucidly narrated his rencontre with the agent of the Darecourt property, then looking inquiringly at his auditor he asked,—

“Was I right or not?”

Unheeding this last request, Lucy said,—

“ You renewed your acquaintance with your former friend, Mr. Darecourt, at that meeting ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Did the agent know of this ? ”

“ That I cannot say.”

“ But he saw you together, Eustace ? ”

“ So I found out afterwards.”

“ And he knew you were warm friends ? ”

“ He did.”

“ Have you had any further meeting with him since ? ”

“ No, and never shall.”

“ I hope not ; had he many opportunities of meeting your friend ? ”

“ Well, Vincent, I mean Mr. Darecourt, said they necessarily met often, that he was commonly civil to his father’s employé, no more, until the day before you saved his life.”

“ What then ? ” she inquired with a dissatisfied expression.

“ My friend told this Flynn of his desire to have some sea-shooting, but that he was quite unused to such sport, and could neither swim nor manage a boat.”

“ Ha ! now let us see,” she slowly said, her face looking very earnest ; “ did Mr. Darecourt meet the agent on the day of the accident ? ”

“ Yes, Flynn induced him to go, pointing out the boat provided with everything ready to start.”

“ But he had been already told his master’s son could not manage it.”

“ Precisely ; when my friend seemed dubious what to do, the agent declared the current would bring him to the shooting-ground and back again, without the necessity for rowing, it being then nearly low water.”

“ I have heard enough,” she answered, lowering her luminous eyes, “ and you say Lord Darecourt hurriedly sent his son from home.”

“He did, and since his departure the former persecutions of the people have been revived, and the determination of the tenantry to assert their rights, abandoned during the heir’s stay, has been renewed with increasing acerbity.”

A pause ensued. Lucy, looking up, in a cool, measured voice said,—

“Eustace Dillon, I am convinced of three things.”

“Name them, Lucy.”

“The first is, that the agent is plotting against you and your friend Mr. Darecourt.”

“He is too insignificant.”

“And secondly, the individual who represented himself as assistant to Dr. Dease, keeping you away from me, is no such person, but a confederate of this agent.”

“Good gracious ! ”

“And lastly,” rising solemnly, “that these associates tried to accomplish the drowning of Mr. Darecourt.”

“ My God ! ” exclaimed Eustace Dillon, springing backwards from her agitated face and fell words. After a short interval, he attempted a trifling smile, saying lightly,—

“ No, no, these unreal apprehensions have overreached your usual powers of calculation.”

“ Look after yourself and your friend,” was firmly responded, accompanied by a meaning gesture. “ There is a deep game being played by clever hands, for a large stake.”

“ I cannot comprehend it.”

“ It means absolute danger,” she continued confidently, “ ay, even death ; ” adding, “ You know, Eustace, the warning black gull betokening evil to my family ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ During my illness it perched upon my closed window-sill, and to-day I watched it.”

“ But, oh, Lucy, all danger is past,” he said tenderly.

“It was not for me, Eustace, I knew full well, as the eyes kept looking outwards, not inwards, but I am concerned in some fatal way, else why was it there?”

“You are too credulous,” he added assuringly.

“No, it came again, but alas, not alone. Two were then outside my window. saw them as plainly and perceptibly as I now do you.”

“Oh, wherefore indulge this brooding, fanciful misery.”

“Ah!” she said wearily, “how foolish to neglect the traditional warning ever pre-saging grief to us! My thought was of my aunt, but that bird bringing another, I fear there are two of those dear to me in danger; the next time they appear I shall divine the melancholy mystery.”

“How, Lucy, how?”

“When those dark-feathered messengers of woe come again, I will open the lattice; if the object of their monition be of great

interest to me, they will alight close to my station ; otherwise keeping apart in proportion as I shall be influenced by the result."

"Great Heaven ! see, see," assumed Eustace timidly, pointing to the window of their sitting-room, where, perched, looking in towards them, were the two fated black gulls.

Without the slightest tremor, Lucy Neville crossed over, opening the casement while her companion wonderingly sank deeper into his seat. Flying straight inwards, these sea-birds circled twice around the apartment, then poised themselves in mid air, and, as if by a preconcerted action, immediately afterwards settled on the chair wherein their observer, astonished and alarmed, sat, one being on each side.

It was a brief stay, however ; by a like common impulse, they both arose, flying outwards in the same decided mood.

"Beware, Eustace Dillon," said his

hostess, in a sepulchral, deep-drawn voice,
“There are two destined to a violent
end. Guard well yourself, and well your
friend.”

CHAPTER XIV.

“ I HAVE been unusually anxious to see you this morning.”

“ Oh indade, me lord. Shure av I'd known I'd av bin here long ago,” said Brien Flynn, the agent, standing before his noble master.

“ Sit down,” observed Lord Darecourt, pointing to a chair, as he stretched his thin heatless limbs towards the fire.

“ Thank yer lordship,” was meekly responded, the deputy placing his hat on the ground, and seating himself, respectfully waiting his superior's commands.

“ I have thought over your suggestion, and, as you appear to dwell so much upon the results, I think it will be wise to bring

Mr. Dorrington Darecourt from Bath as soon as possible."

"Well, me lord, I am plazed yer av the same opinyon as me humble sel'," adding, "ye see the bysiness is very extensive, an' av yer lordship's nephey——"

"Say, Mr. Dorrington, please," was interposed sharply.

"Av coorse, me lord, why not? Well av Misther Dorrington id be so kind as to cum wid me now an' thin among the people, there id soon be a diffirince in their behayvour."

"That seems feasible," answered the old man.

"Beside, me lord, id isn't altogither nathural as how no wan looks afther the accounts excipt what I show yer lordship. I'd be betther contint av they wor chicked, an' who so like to purtect yer lordship's intherist as some av yer lordship's own flesh an' blood?"

"It is very candid of you o suggest it

in this light, Flynn; but were I not aware of your honesty and painstaking services, I should not follow your practical advice so implicitly as I have hitherto done."

"Thank yer lordship for that same, 'tis more nor I merit, but I do me best, anyhow,"—a covert smile swept across his glossy clean-shaven face.

"You are aware I have never yet seen Mr. Dorrington."

"I'm behouldin' t'yer lordship for that same informashun," was responded.

"I may say there were private reasons for this course, and but for the expeditious and accurate reports you gave me concerning him, I should have allowed matters to remain unchanged. Now, however, I will give you a letter to bring Mr. Dorrington over. By the way," added Lord Darecourt, "how is that person progressing whom my son rescued from drowning?"

"Purty well, me lord, from what I hear."

“ You describe her as being very commonplace.”

“ She is, me lord, an’ I regret the misforthin av Misther Vincent bein’ av use to her, shure she kem here lookin’ afther him.”

“ What impudence,” exclaimed the attenuated form wrathfully. “ Your advice to send my son away was evidently discreet and timely.”

“ I always sthrive for the bist, me lord, an’ Misther Vincent tould me he wor glad to get back to England.”

“ It is strange he has not yet written to me, Flynn.”

“ Well, me lord, there must be allowances med for young heads absint from home.”

“ You are ever creating excuses for what I regard as neglect,” said Lord Darecourt, looking into the fire, while the employé concealed a leer on his parted lips by covering them with his fingers.

“ Musha, me lord, wouldn't I be contint av the world wor payceable an' happy.”

“ Very laudable indeed, Flynn,” observed his listener,—but with marked emphasis,—“ I fancy there is less contentment among the people since Mr. Vincent went away. How do you account for this change ? ”

“ Ah, yer lordship 'ill be so kind as not to ax me.”

“ I hope there exists no reason why I should not know.”

“ Well, av yer lordship plazes, bud I'd rather not.”

“ I insist, sir. What do you mean ? ”

“ Thin shure, me lord, 'tis like this. Whin Misther Vincent wor here they chayted him, an' I cudn't interfere be-kayze av affindin' his honour, an'——”

“ What else ? ” petulantly.

“ An' for the rayson, I now make thim do what is only jist to yer lordship, they are throublesome, which don't signify

so long as I keep thim to the right mark."

"I think less of my son, day by day," bitterly, came from the aged parent.

"Oh," mournfully echoed the agent.

"Do not interrupt me," proceeded the former. "If Mr. Dorrington realizes what I expect of him from your report, I shall depute the management of my entire affairs to him and you, my son remaining indefinitely in England until he has fallen into my views in all things."

As Brien Flynn lowly and respectfully retired from the presence of his noble employer, walking towards Wentworth Waste to meet Mr. Dorrington Darecourt, he took a comprehensive *résumé* of his present and future prospects. "Vincent is gon," he thought, "an' his couzin takes his place. Very good; what next? The deeds must be got at, an' the will med complayte; thin whin all's riddy, the ould lord's got rid av, an' Dorrington's proved

to be owner, Vincent becomin' what Dorrington ought to be, ha, ha ! That's fine. What av poor Miss Chalmers ? Why, av coorse, Dorrington marries her ; good enof for him too, afther helpin' him to the little property. Yis, that 'ill do," he mused, " bud' Misther Dorrington, I'll be an the shure side, ye nivir seen the deeds yit, an' afore ye do I'll hav' a nate copy med to put in plaice av the rayl parchmints ; thin av ye don't giv' me a fair share av the whack, I'll turn thim over t' yer couzin, the thrue lord, ha, ha, ha ! What a lucky card," he silently continued, " that terrible Michael O'Grady plays into our hands, thinking as how Dorrington is Vincent the great frind av Eustace Dillon. Ah," this last hated name fired him up as he went on, " I'd rather not hav' a hand in bringin' the ribel to the often baffled skaffold, he niver don me harm ; bud as id sthands, av I can only git at Dillon an' layve him to the marcy givin' to thraitors be couplin'

him wid O'Grady, this I'll do as sartin as I might risk the chance av iternity to make money."

Reaching Wentworth Waste he walked upwards, where, awaiting him in the ruins stood Dorrington Darecourt.

The unusually pleased smile upon Brien Flynn's face reflected the successful import of his journey.

"All right, Misther Dorrington," he jubilantly said, "that's sittled, yer uncle 'll write ye a littler this very day, which av coorse," accompanied by a wink, "goes to ye in England, but in rayality, 'twill find ye here, an' in good time ye'll make yer dhue appearince at the Castle."

"I must congratulate you, Flynn," replied the young man. "It was evident you would succeed in your skilful attacks on Lord Darecourt's credulity,"—here they laugh,—“and I am glad the end is at hand. You cannot believe how intolerable it is to be tied down to a certain restraint or fixed idea

when one's inclinations lead in an opposite groove, but the game we are playing is of no mean order, and the stake is equally high. Once firmly located in the Castle, there's nothing but an indolent old man's life left standing between us and success."

"Whew," replied the deputy through his open lips, "that's the ayziest part. What I want is to shnare Eustace Dillon, an' no wan can do id but yersel'."

"No questionable procedure, mind you," answered his companion with an admonishing look.

"What," exclaimed Brien Flynn ironically, "ye talk like that afther what we've don ?"

"Now, mark me," proceeded the younger man sternly, "our compact refers only to Darecourt, outside of that I do not at present see my way. At all events I will not willingly add to the perils of an unfortunate man who rightly or wrongly

attempted too much in a cause wherein he believed."

"Misther Dorrington," said the agent in deep hollow tones, "I'd sacrifize all I own or expict to git to hav revinge an Eustace Dillon."

"And I am equally decided that I will not help you to this laudable consummation if I can possibly avoid it."

"Not help me," was echoed, "whin I sthrove so much for ye, Misther Dorrington," uttered Brien deprecatingly.

"No idle sentiment, Flynn," was the civil reply. "The day for misunderstanding is past between us. You know what I want, and I am well aware you seek money; 'plainest issues are always best,'" he added noticing the effect his unexpected words had on his downcast companion.

The latter, suddenly uplifting his contemplative face, inquired,—

"Are you aware, sir, Misther Eustace

Dillon knows more av the affairs av Darecourt nor is good for us."

"Ha!" cried the young man, starting with a hasty apprehensive look. "Pray explain yourself."

"In the days gon by, whin Leddy Darecoort wor alive, he wor her warm fayvorite, as his lordship tould me himsel', there's not a corner in the Castle anbeknown to him, an' 'tis me mind," bending close to his attentive listener, "Eustace Dillon knows we had a hand in the boat bysiness."

"Good heavens! how can that be?"

"Well, he has sed plainly Mither Vincent tould him as how whin goin' down undher the wather he saw two min in Darecoort jeerin' at him widout offerin' a helpin' hand."

"That's not true," answered Dorrington fiercely; "there was one laughing, I was not."

"Thru for ye, sir, sthill 'tis bekayse

there wor two they cudn't make the bysiness out.'

"But what does all this suspicion avail? you don't prove anything."

"Only this, sir," replied Brien Flynn firmly; "as shure as yer sthandin' there, Eustace Dillon has me book'd for id, an' though for the prisint he's baulked, wondherin' who the second man wor, he'll jist put id down to us two, ay, an' be belayved; the people all knowin' he's cute an' hanest, to be relied an."

"Yes, there's something deserving consideration in what you now say, although I'm glad it is nothing more serious."

"Id is, sir, more sarious, too sarious even for you, Misther Dorrington."

"Amazement! what do you mean?"

"This, sir," said the agent warningly, "wanst he gits the people to belayve ayther av us thried to thrip up yer couzin, we shud go——"

"Go where, Flynn?"

“ Anywhere to eskaype bein’ shot an’ chucked in the toide.”

“ This is a serious prospect,” exclaimed the aristocrat ; “ and I begin to see your view is correct after all ; we must keep a sharp look-out, Flynn, ready to strike when it is necessary, not sooner.

“ Ah, Misther Dorrington, I’m glad ye kem round to yer thrueself,”—the speaker gleefully rubbed his hands.

“ What do you wish me to do next, pray ? ”

“ Whin ye git a chance av meeting the ribel agin, sthick to him, promise anythin’, make him belayve in ye, quietly drawin’ suffishint out av him to raych Dillon, an’ we’ll hav’ thim both arristed.”

“ Would not my name appear in connexion therewith ? ”

“ Not a bit, sir. The govirnment id give £500 to git hould av the first, not a sowl bein’ minshined.”

“ But how does that affect Dillon ? ”

“Why,” replied the agent, laughing, “jist in this way, Misther Dorrington: whin ye’ve got enof av informashun out av O’Grady to sittle thim both, I’ll giv’ the nicessary word to nab thim. No wan ’ill know us, an’ we’ll pockit the £500.”

“Good heavens,” shouted the young man angrily, “do not dare to speak of the base gain in my presence. I loathe the mention of such cowardliness;” continuing, “it is enough for my complete degradation to hold parley on such a contemptible subject.”

Brien Flynn appeared amazed at his confederate’s foolish resolve, but he thought, “So much the bettther; afther all, I’ll hav’ more for mesel’.”

“To-morrow,” observed Dorrington Darecourt, recovering his equanimity, “I will be here at the same hour,” and turning on his heel they parted, not a semblance of mere average warmth being

interchanged either in glance or form between them.

The agent moved speedily away, while his dissatisfied accomplice looking at his watch resolved, "I shall remain here, although she cannot arrive for another hour; however, I will smoke and think upon that thoroughbred blackhearted villain whom fortune has thrown in my path to advance my purpose, much as I despise and detest him."

"Mr. Vincent Darecourt keeps questionable company," was exclaimed from the opposite side of the broad wall, over which, with a sharp clean bound, a figure vaulted, revealing the stern, bronzed features of the intrepid O'Grady.

CHAPTER XV.

THE City of Dublin was cast into a state of high excitement when it suddenly became known that the renowned Michael O'Grady, Esq., B.A., etc., etc., etc., had espoused the national platform, becoming at once its most advanced leader and doughty champion.

Harrowing the major portion of his increasing auditors by the recital of the cause for this adoption, a case in no wise differing from a number of similar instances of eviction continually recurring, which would only end, he emphatically asserted, "when the control of their dear country was wrenched from the unhallowed grasp of the Saxon."

The patriot's example was quickly followed by others of equal social status with himself, but by none so personally gifted or accomplished.

His accession to the popular side unquestionably stimulated "the good cause," precipitating the issue—a fiery, harrowing rebellion. It is somewhat remarkable that the leaders in this movement were not of the national religion nor of the class sprung from the people, being principally gentlemen, among whom the legal element was largely represented.

Throwing himself heart and soul into the enticing pursuit, the ardent young lawyer speedily became one of the most marked men in the land—loved or hated respectively by those who either admired or loathed him, with all that fervency of impulse at once the characteristic and the bane of the Celt.

It was generally understood that on the first plausible pretext he would be arrested

by the government, who were anxious to make a speedy example of one so eminently dangerous.

His natural tact, however, made him a formidable antagonist in the sphere of diplomacy, and overtly there could be no actual charge of treason as yet maintained against him. While playing the victor in these bloodless issues, he made his position more and more impregnable in the public view.

Deeply pained by his son's secession from the parental opinions and teaching, his father haughtily commanded him to retrace his steps, or he would disown him. That fatal behest to his only child indelibly severed them—henceforth they were apart. Ay, and be it noted not only in sentiment but in reality, even his mother turned somewhat angrily from him.

In Ireland there could be no parallel lines; it must be for, or against;

Michael and his parents becoming implacably severed.

He felt the change but little, owing to the exciting nature of his every-day life, sometimes a yearning desire to see his mother took possession of him, never, however, was it carried into practice, and as his name came more and more before the public, in connexion with the Nationalists, so did his father's undying dislike of him and them increase, until at length the son was disinherited.

Placed suddenly without means, instead of seeking a reconciliation with his parents, as the latter fully expected, the young enthusiast calmly reasoned, " I have saved a little money, and can hold out for some time ; before it is gone Ireland shall be free, or cursed with the taint of a deeper slavery ; in the former event I can survive this unjust act of a bigoted, mistaken father. If the latter, why the paternal Saxon government will be only too anxious to exalt me beyond

the reach of necessity," and he laughed sarcastically, simulating the action of placing a rope around his neck.

The insurgents had already taken the field in several places, but the clergy of the popular Church laboured so assiduously and successfully to prevent the insurrection, that not one out of every fifty calculated upon by their leaders stood to their oaths and guns when needed. Very soon those small bands were either dispersed by the soldiers, or forced into becoming nomads in the interior of the country.

It was not so, however, with the league organized and led by O'Grady. Under this intrepid officer, deeply revered by his resolute followers, there had already been fought and won some actually large engagements, wherein the military were severely beaten, which naturally increased his confidence and that of those serving under him, besides bringing

to his ranks contingents from even remote quarters.

The chief had now several hundred sober, fairly-drilled, determined men, waiting his orders on the outskirts of the Wicklow Mountains, when he received information that on a certain day a picked number of the *élite* of the regulars would be despatched against him, well found in guns, and every requisite necessary to decimate those stubborn insurgents, the order being to give no quarter.

“ This is good news,” said he to his partisans, with an heroic look, “ at one stroke we shall terminate this undertaking ;” continuing, “ it is only a fair day’s march to Dublin by the Enniskerry road. My plan is to anticipate these red-coats by tramping through the night in small numbers, rendezvous at Stillorgan, and either surprise them, falling upon them with all our strength, sudden and collective, or by allowing their fruitless journey to

Powerscourt we can move straight on to Dublin in their absence, and establish ourselves even in the Castle itself: remember," he confidently continued, "courage does wonders."

The former course, however, was adopted, presenting as it did every facility for taking the soldiers in ambush, and capturing the guns and war *matériel*, of which the league had none.

Sitting in the rude low-roofed farmhouse, serving the purpose of a tent and head-quarters, vacantly looking into the brown turf fire, O'Grady thought of the approaching conflict, and glowingly anticipated a victorious issue.

The theme was in consonance with his soul-felt longing for the independence of Ireland, and under its absorbing pleasurable influence and that of the well-stacked fire he soon fell into an easy sleep, dreaming and re-dreaming.

By the time he woke up, the day had

sunk upon those wooded hills, and night entombed the valley, stretching far away below his feet, wherefrom a haze came creeping slowly upwards, and a calm, soft stillness pervaded everything.

Trying to shake off the reminiscences of the late unpleasant reverie, he paced up and down the small room with his hands clasped behind his back, after an interval suddenly exclaiming, "Hesitation is of no use, I shall go to my mother, even now this dream has left an impression upon me that the end of one of us is at hand."

Returning the salute, he quickly left the sentry in the distance. Galloping towards Dublin, his well-fashioned, useful animal soon making tracks on the road, mile after mile being covered until he was pulled up, panting and steaming, at a well-known house of call in Harold's Cross. After a few careful words with the landlord, O'Grady swallowed a tumblerful of hot

brandy, and walked into Dublin, that tall determined looking man passing onwards with a certainty of being unmolested which would have been hazardous in the equestrian.

Avoiding the central streets he passed close under the Phœnix Park, and keeping northwards, reached Phibsborough, whence turning to the right, he rapidly neared Clontarf;—the few persons about were principally of the official element, and moving onwards with a decisive “Good-night,” he was unquestioned.

In this way the chief arrived at the turning leading to Artane, when a faint wailing cry rose on his attentive ear, and presently despite the overwhelming darkness, far out in the mid-stream of that full tide, he discovered the outlines of a boat, with muffled oars, plied steadily by four figures, gliding surely but slowly along. Again that faint cry tinged the sullied night air, making his heart beat tumultuously

as ceasing to row he observed one of those dark figures rise up in the boat and display certain actions, as though gagging some one lying in its bottom.

Forgetful of everything else but the conviction that there was a foul deed contemplated, if not already perpetrated, in that craft, O'Grady ran on close to the edge of the tide, watching the progress of those silent steady rowers. He anxiously looked for any stray skiff whereby he could at once give chase, but there was nothing except the soft pliant sand, concealing his every footfall, and the mark of the receding limpid wave.

It now became evident, as the boat headed for Dollymount, that the "Bullwall" was the place to intercept her. Flushed with the unknown adventure and his exertions, he soon reached the entrance thereto, creeping along the old bridge, where, in the proud days of yore (he thought), "we beat our invaders, and forced the Danes

into the tide." That shadowy vessel did not, however, face towards the bridge, but made straight for the wall itself, somewhat nearing its other end, drawing up beside the rocks, behind which he stooped eagerly listening.

"Out wid him," said one; "we'll soon put an ind to the garrion."

The prostrate figure essayed to speak, but the gag fully accomplished its choking mission.

"I'm not for shootin' him, boys," was an opinion, rather timidly suggested.

"Bah! we are," sharply retorted in accord.

"Git him up; make him walk: 'tis the layst he can do for our throuble."

"Where'll he be shot?" inquired the man who was not for shooting him.

"There's a posth an the flat above. We'll tie him, an' ivery gun blazes at the word 'Three.'"

"Don!"

“ Don ! ” was echoed.

“ Don ! ” came later from one voice, however.

“ Make yer pisthols riddy, boys ; thin we’ll hoist him up.”

“ Right ye are,” was answered. “ Whin we fire, back the boat av the rocks, an’ row might an’ main round the Poolbeg to Sandymount ; ’twill throw the divil himsel’ av the scint.”

“ Thruе for ye,” observed the former counsellor, adding, “ now, thin, up wid him.”

Making a dull sound in his throat, the prostrate figure was uplifted and impelled forward by his captors towards the fatal object looming in the distance.

With piteous distortions of body, vainly clinging to every obstacle presenting itself, their victim was ruthlessly dragged along and bound firmly to the time-worn post, against which the wretched human outcast helplessly reclined. The preliminaries being complete, a voice was heard, enjoining—

“ Now, face fair, an’ at ‘ Wan, two, three ! ’ all fire.”

“ Yis, yis,” answered two of the confederates, but the third and last interposed,—

“ Let the poor wretch say his prayers, anyhow. Out wid the gag even for haf a minnit.”

“ Curse him ! not a minnit ! ” was angrily shouted. “ He’ll die like a dog. Riddy ! Wan, two——”

“ Down, paltry cowards ! ” surged upon their ears as a form of immense power already glared upon them with a pistol in each hand, continuing, “ Back, I say, ye yelping curs, who would refuse a fellow-being the right to supplicate his God.”

They quickly slunk out of sight, while O’Grady withdrew the gag and liberated the unknown, who, recovering speech, threw himself on his knees, saying,—

“ Oh, sir ! what can I do for you who have saved my life ? ”

“ Nothing ; I only performed my duty, but who are you ? ”

“ Robert Arkwright. And may I inquire the name of my deliverer ? ”

“ Yes,” was calmly replied, “ Michael O’Grady, the rebel.”

CHAPTER XVI.

“It is useless to try to dissuade me,” answered Miss Neville, in the reception-room of Nevillestown, with a ringing tone of nerved purpose. “I own to it reluctantly, indeed, regretfully, but we cannot be friends longer—at all events, in the active sense of the term.”

“Do not be irate, Lucy dear. I am weary of the reflection of having been so unkind, especially in your protracted illness; but be generous, content that I have awakened to my truer self, late though it is, and that I am here to plead for forgiveness.”

“Forgive—yes, that I have already done, but”—the speaker grew warm—“that I

could hold you in sincere friendship again is utterly impossible. It is very hard"—lowering her voice—"to say those two most melancholy words 'No more,' and I wish——" she faltered, burying her face in her handkerchief.

Her shrewd observer, interpreting this agitation as a favourable omen, quickly moved to Miss Neville's side, but the transient girlish sentiment had already perished, and its frail, ephemeral chord of emotion was rent, sacrificed to a sense of duty, as the calm, composed face of the young mistress of Nevillestown encountered that of her vacillating visitor.

"Fanny Chalmers," urged Lucy, in tones almost hard with resolution, "something tells me we were never fitted for each other, and this incompatibility to be true friends shall, I fear, be made apparent even in the proximate future,—why, I do not know; nor do I wish to say more, having already departed from my intention in

going thus far. Leave me," she added, rising, "lest I fail in my duty. May our future careers be so far apart as that we cannot meet again. I bear you no thought but regret, and now bid you farewell, a long, a last farewell."

"Farewell," was mockingly echoed, a wild passionate fury gleaming in the speaker's eyes, "but not for long. I will soon bring you to my feet, Miss Neville. My purpose is already formed to annihilate your contemplated happiness when nearest its achievement. Mark well," she added, in biting, rancorous accents, keenly impinging on the object for whom they were intended, "in the hour of your greatest joy you will meet your deepest sorrow. Remember these my parting words."

The speaker violently slammed the door, shutting out her own distorted, inflamed face, while the recollection of her cruel threats deepened upon her auditor.

At length Lucy resolved on shaking off this apathy by indulging in a canter along the coast, when, to her evident satisfaction, Eustace Dillon was announced. With the old weird melancholy he advanced, and, taking her outstretched hands, looked interestedly and musingly, as though in abstract meditation.

At first the subject of that continued searching gaze of solicitude became somewhat embarrassed ; however, this feeling of surprise was soon succeeded by an air of calm, gentle anxiety, as she inquired,—

“Eustace, why do you seem so mysterious ? ”

“Mysterious?” suddenly letting fall her hands ; “I do not know what way I seem, I only know I am your slave.”

He spoke slowly, with eyes fixed upon the carpet.

“Oh ! please do not wrong yourself,” was answered passionately.

“Alas ! ” he resumed, “there is no

wrong Lucy ; already I feel I am—well, well, I will say it—a mere fool ! ”

Lucy Neville placed her frail tapered fingers upon his shoulder, and, in a voice swelling with soft gentleness, said,—

“ It pains me so much, dear Eustace, to tell you, but I have no alternative ; you know every particle of real devoted sisterly affection in my being is already yours. ”

“ I do, ” still preserving his calm, quiescent, pensive attitude.

“ Then spare me. ” Her eyes grew dim. “ Leave me this devoted sisterly claim. I cannot be more to you. ”

“ This I also was aware of, ” he replied.

“ Then, ” she surprisingly inquired, “ wherefore agitate me by referring to what is impossible ? ”

“ Lucy, listen to me. ” Again he took her hand in his, standing erect, with those full, black, passionate eyes, miser-like,

fixedly regarding her. "This day I resolved to anticipate my destiny, and seek the refuge of some other land, where, forgotten, I will close my clouded days and ill-starred nights in unavailing recollections of what I have been, since fate would seem to have decreed it so." In visible emotion she bowed her head, unmindful of which he proceeded. "Who but the Great Dispenser of all things can ever know what existence has been to me, separated from those congenial in habit and in years, with my reserved inner self, the thought of my orphaned brother alone reconciling me to life? Ah! then it was, Lucy, I first knew what you had become to me in this blank world. Ah," he added, restraining her imploring gesture, "how on my bosom's deepest page your name was indelibly written. You need not repeat," he continued in a bitter tone, "nor tell me what I have long known, that the forlorn Eustace might be your brother; but no more. The

heart truly speaks its own burden and reflects its own answer."

"You are terribly perverse in over-estimating others," said Lucy bluntly. "Tell me, has anything recently happened to you of undue moment?"

"There has."

"May I inquire what it is?"

"My sole trusted companion, Darecourt, has just wilfully terminated a sincere friendship of deep and long continuance."

"Impossible!" was ejaculated.

"Alas! I have the irrefutable evidence in his own handwriting," he answered, placing a letter on the table, of which she took no notice, but continued,—

"You must have erred grievously in the character you gave me of this gentleman—Lord Darecourt's son."

"Ah, no!" was his dejected reply, "it is my unlucky fate. Why should even one be left on whom I could place an honest reliance?"

“ May I venture upon another query ? ” she said, with a glance full of meaning.

“ Oh, with pleasure.”

“ Eustace, have you seen Mr. O’Grady lately ? ”

“ I have not.”

“ How mysterious ! ” was spoken aloud.

“ Why mysterious ? ”

“ I cannot inform you at present,” she went on significantly ; “ very soon I will tell you all. Meanwhile the advice I gave before will bear repetition : guard yourself and your friend ; for, notwithstanding this annoying epistle from Mr. Darecourt, I still believe you wrong him.”

As she finished the last word, Lucy lifted a letter from off the sofa, handing it to her companion.

“ Thank you,” he answered. “ I would it were as you say. But, great Heaven ! what is this ? ” reading aloud.

“ Dublin, 9 o’clock.

“ MY DARLING FANNY,—

“I send this by special messenger.
To-day; old place, at four.

“ Your devoted

“ VINCENT DARECOURT.”

Speechless, they regard each other in wondering anxiety, when suddenly Lucy Neville hurried to the side of Eustace Dillon, saying,—

“I have it now! Fanny Chalmers called here before you arrived, and sat there,” indicating the place where the mysterious letter had been found.

“Then,” he soliloquised sadly, “can it be possible Vincent Darecourt is in Ireland unknown, and has become the victim of that designing girl? Oh! it is monstrous to conceive such a misfortune!”

After reading, and re-reading that anomalous communication, they sat in silence apart, engrossed in the reflection,

“What did it all mean, and how could such an incomprehensible thing have occurred?”

The long-sustained pause was broken by the hostess slowly saying,—

“You remember our recent *rencontre* with those black gulls, Eustace?”

“Yes.”

“Then be convinced,” she continued affirmatively, “that in some way Miss Chalmers is associated with the issue portended by those fatal birds.”

“Whatever the issue, I may well renew my raillery against the turpitude of society if so good a man as Vincent Darecourt has fallen, ensnared in the meshes of this unwomanly girl.”

“Think it seriously over between now and to-morrow, and I will do likewise,” said Lucy, rising and going towards him. “You must be my brother, my fond brother, Eustace; although not blessed with keen prescience, it is plain to me

my future is drifting into a perilous labyrinth, wherein such a help will be sadly needed."

"May no shadow mar your dearest, best aspirations! yet thrice welcome would be the happy hour wherein I could end my miserable existence to serve you."

"Oh!" warmly, "forego this phantasy, you shall live for the sake of others; I will not assail your present convictions further to-day at all events; you must endeavour to arrive at some conclusion respecting this momentous letter by the time we meet to-morrow," and exchanging the firmest of friendly salutations, they parted, Eustace going homewards, while Lucy soon after betook herself for a meditative saunter on the sea-shore.

Hitherto, she had only traced a fugitive outline of the face of the drowning Vincent Darecourt, whom she had not seen

before or since his rescue, although its helpless resigned look was surely ineffaceable, heightened by that dread accompaniment of death.

Still until that mysterious missive from Eustace Dillon's associate to the discarded Fanny Chalmers lay before her, Miss Neville had never thought interestedly of Lord Darecourt's son. Now she paced the strand, wondering by what fatuity he had prostrated himself at the shrine of that heartless girl, while she was even unthanked for having saved his life, thereby almost forfeiting her own. Eustace had told her of his friend being prevented seeing her by the presumed assistant of Dr. Dease, and that, failing in this, he had written his thanks before leaving Ireland, but she knew nothing of either circumstance, and cared but little, she supposed until now, when a feeling of apprehensive dislike dawned in her mind against Fanny Chalmers, whose

significant vengeful words were vividly before her.

“Eustace! alas,” she contemplated, “what would I not give to rescue him from his melancholy brooding habits? Poor fellow, his is a hard lot to endure, and this unaccountable failure of Mr. Darecourt’s friendship tells heavily upon him. I will induce him to come each day and accompany me in my walks and rides; what need we care, all that a sister could I shall be to him, and when this is understood, he cannot have a valid reason for absenting himself from Nevillstown. No more of those superficial Fanny Chalmerses living to assail and waylay the peace of others.”

Strolling along these sloping white sands, Lucy pondered deeper than she had hitherto done upon that eventful day when Rover spirited over the very place she was now passing. There it was she heard the first faint wail of distress, and here at her feet

are those seemingly inaccessible time-worn rocks, her horse so marvellously scaled.

Thus communing within herself with eyes riveted on each freshly revealed mark of interest, she reached the end of the breakwater, sitting down thoughtful and meditative on the spot wherefrom, when her restive animal refused the leap, she had cast herself fearlessly into the tide.

A desolate weary feeling almost overpowered her while gazing seaward towards the fatal place where the drowning stranger had been seen fast sinking ; deeper and more real became her pensive, dejected abstraction, until half aloud she soliloquized, "What a cruel world is this, to-day tossed against a chance object, influencing our whole future, yet to-morrow it is gone for ever. Ah, my destiny, say, shall we meet again ? "

"If Miss Neville deems it not too worthless, will she take back the life she gave ? Without her it has become insupportable ? "

The slight colour on Lucy's classical face fled, as, transfixed with astonishment, she beheld Vincent Darecourt, hat in hand, standing respectfully before her.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT that advanced hour it was impossible for O'Grady to go in quest of his mother, and the city being under martial law, the task of getting back through it was necessarily attended with great risk ; however, it had to be accomplished at any peril. The agent clung to his deliverer in the homeward walk along the "Bull wall," even the displacement of a tiny stone freezing him with renewed alarm and apprehension.

Avoiding all efforts at conversation, the chief anxiously meditated how to regain his horse and return to the camp : one course finally resolving to follow, when, turning sharply to his companion as

they neared Clontarf, he peremptorily inquired,—

“Arkwright, are you willing to do me an important service to-night?”

“Willing to move heaven and earth for you so far as I can,” was the warm affirmative.

The questioner rebukingly replied, “Extremes are to be avoided,” continuing, “but you are known here, and I want you to procure a conveyance to take us across Dublin.”

“That I will do,” was replied with recovering calmness, as the blood continued its revivifying course through his benumbed veins.

At this point a night patrol overtook them, demanding,—

“Who are you?”

“Mr. Robert Arkwright,” came from the owner of that name.

“Who is this gentleman?”

“A friend of Mr. Arkwright,” was almost

sternly volunteered by the stranger indicated—before the sentence was finished in the agent's mouth—and bowing they went onwards.

Now it happened that something in Arkwright's manner or voice aroused O'Grady's suspicions ere they had gone many yards further, when, in a tone pregnant with meaning and resolve, the latter observed,—

“Did you think I was afraid of those agents of the Saxon?”

“It was not an envious position, you must admit,” was tartly answered.

“I am always prepared for danger,” continued the former speaker: “and though fifty met us to-night—ay, and if they knew me, I should still go forth unharmed.”

“This is marvellous. Are you certain of what you assert?”

“I am,” answered the chief, “and you shall know it.”

“ I will be glad to do so,” in an affected tone.

“ Then,” in slow, laboured accents, “ this is my plan. You have materially risen in the world since last we met, reveling in the expatriation of our countrymen, while creeping up in the sphere of an unholy ambition, accomplished by the robbery of both employer and tenant.”

“ Am I to bear this, even from you ? No, I will not ! ” was passionately echoed.

“ You shall and will ! Mark me, Robert Arkwright,” continued his deliverer, “ I will place my life in no man’s keeping, least of all in that of yours, a servile tool of the Government in their policy of spoliation and infamy. To-night you shall help one to escape for whose capture this same Government would give an unknown reward—not that paltry £500,” pointing to an official document affixed to the post they were now passing.

“I—” interrupted Arkwright in unsteady accents, “I will get the conveyance : more I cannot offer.”

“Yes, you both can and must,” was sternly replied. “Look at these pistols, and hearken to my words ! Instantly procure that vehicle, and accompany me therein to Harold’s Cross ; to the demand of every patrol, affirming I am your friend, or, should you fail, and I be recognized, I will blow you to atoms before I lose my liberty ;” adding, with a smile of contempt, “they would sooner connive at my escape than forfeit your bloodhound services.”

Thus these two went through the city of Dublin, the agent owing his life to the celebrated rebel now coolly and watchfully sitting beside him, the latter being well aware that gratitude from that trafficker in humanity, was as little to be depended upon as that the fleet, unstable imagery of childhood will withstand the test of real life.

“My best wish is that we shall never meet again,” said O’Grady, alighting at the foot of Harold’s Cross bridge.

Before the echo of his words was lost, he had swiftly disappeared on the other side, while Arkwright hissing “We shall meet again” through his ground teeth, lashed the horse at a furious pace, galloping back along the road they had traversed, until in Harcourt Street he met an escort, to the leader of whom he shouted,

“Quick, for your lives! Take the road from Harold’s Cross bridge, and you will come up with the rebel O’Grady, whom but ten minutes ago I saw pass over it on foot.”

“On, my men!” excitedly replied the officer, returning Arkwright’s salute, and placing himself at the head of the troops they went forward at a fierce pace, passing the Portobello Gardens, and over the bridge.

Dividing into pairs the soldiers scoured Harold’s Cross Common and the adjacent lanes, unsuccessfully, until despairing and

wearied of the search they turned their horses' heads towards the city, proceeding in a dispirited, straggling fashion in the dark. The officer, somewhat near the footway, had just passed the corner of a by-road, when a glove struck him in the face, and a mocking voice greeted him, saying, "With Michael O'Grady's compliments—ha, ha, ha!" The leader and his men instantly settled into a headlong gallop, pursuing that indistinct figure fleeing ahead. A derisive "Ha, ha, ha!" again discordantly assailed them, and a moment later the rebel was gone, every one of their horses baulking at the wide mill-stream he had just vanished across. Day woke up, shaking off the sable of night, ere O'Grady appeared in the camp, and, resigning his horse to an orderly, he speedily slept, a deep, refreshing sleep, known only to those whose office in this life is to toil.

On the next night the momentous march

towards Dublin to intercept the regulars was to be essayed, and the chiefs of the movement had already assembled for the last council, assigning to each his decisive part in the hazardous undertaking.

O'Grady occupied the post of honour, and the subject of conference was early settled, terminating with a hearty, "God send us success!"

Leaving the camp for a look around, the chief was accosted by a stranger, who, touching his rough cap, meekly inquired, "D'ye think, yer honour, be any maynes I cud git to deliver a littler to the bould Ginerall O'Grady?"

"You are unconsciously flattering," was responded with a smile; "but answer, who is the letter from?"

"An ould man jist at the point av death, yer honour."

"Where?"

"Marcer's Hospital, sir."

"What is his name?"

“Bob Doyle.”

“Then give it to me.”

“Shure ye don’t mayne to say as how yer honour is that great splindid ginerall Misther O’Grady. Oh dear, oh dear,” rubbing his hands gleefully.

“Enough of this,” was answered from beneath a grave, displeased brow, the rebel reading as follows :—

“*Marcet’s Hospital.*

“HONOURED SIR,—Pardin this inthrusin. I’m lavin’ this world, God help me, to join me poor wife, who ye know died here afther we wor lift widout the shelther av the ould home in Dangan. Afore I die I want to see ye to tell ye a saycrit that ’ill presarve yer honour in the hour av throuble. Don’t niglict a poor sinner’s grateful request an’ warnin’, com to yer thrue sarvint,

“BOB DOYLE.”

“This is a remarkable request; the

circumstances, too, are very fresh in my memory; but what can he want with me?" and the reader relapsed into a fit of musing, holding the open letter in his hand.

"Has yer honour any answer?" respectfully inquired the messenger.

"None, there is some money, go your way back. Yet I really do not know what to do."

"The ould man is very bad, sir," was pathetically pleaded.

"Say no more, I will see to it," exclaimed O'Grady, and, turning on his heel, he went thoughtfully by the watchful sentry.

"It is remarkable that I should be written to by this old man," he pondered, "the knowledge of whom has made me what I am. Yet something moves me to go; the novelty of the mission, too, is its best guard against danger. Maybe it will promote the dying man's happiness. It

shall be," he continued, "but to baffle even the possibility of deceit, I will set forth at once, thus anticipating the messenger."

It was during that dubious interval marking the last hour of day and the first of night, that a steaming horse drew up in front of Marcer's Hospital, and, carelessly throwing the reins to the porter, its rider ascended the high flight of steps leading into the not over capacious hall.

"You have a patient here named Bob Doyle," was inquired by the warm equestrian.

"Yes, sir."

"Could I see him."

"Yes, sir. Tim," continued the door-keeper, "take this gentleman to No. 49 B.," and, following the ready Tim, the gentleman soon found himself in a large ward fitted up with beds on both sides, all occupied by those clean white-capped patients

"This gentleman is for 49 B."

"This way, sir, playze," responded the dumpy nurse. "Aizey, I think he's ashleep."

The equestrian stooped over the form, drawing the close curtains gently back, when he was immediately seized and held from behind by a dozen hands, despite his almost superhuman struggles. Robert Arkwright, the agent, leisurely rose from the bed where he had successfully simulated the sick man, and, looking with a sardonic grin at the bound, prostrate giant, said,—

"Ha, ha! Mister rebel O'Grady, we have met sooner than you contemplated."

Now standing upright the captive repressed every trace of emotion, exclaiming in a voice overwhelming in its concentrated intensity of warning,—

"Robert Arkwright, last night I saved you, when but one short word stood be-

tween you and eternity ; to-day this act is requited by dragging the great name of the Omnipotent into your deceptive plot, to make me your dupe ; but, beware, my end is not yet come. We shall meet once more, when, if but to avenge this outrage against gratitude, you shall fall crushed by my withering hand."

"Great Heaven, what is that ? see ! see !" exclaimed several voices at once, and, turning, all looked horrified. There high up over the spot just vacated by Arkwright rose a magnificent constellation of light completely eclipsing all else in that large ward, its beams expanding until it became painful longer to look upon it, but riveting the fascinated eyes of these unwilling observers who were held spell-bound whereby.

Gradually the illumination parted in the middle, evolving a colour resembling a beautiful delicate sea green, while the Bay

of Dublin lay miniatures in that unnatural yet too perfect semblance.

The plains of Malahide next rose up, holding their recognized place in the marvellous delineation, but the acme of power and effect was clearly reserved for that which was now presented. There stood a four-roomed, strong-built, slated house, a pony harnessed to a smart, well-built gig, a fine heavy milch cow, several industrious pigs, and a whole tribe of poultry.

The door of the house slowly opened, revealing, located before a fire in a well-furnished apartment, a family consisting of three persons, evidently in good circumstances, and happy, consisting of father, mother, and daughter. Like a lightning flash, this domestic scene was replaced by the same home in ruins, having a child's grave near thereto, the mother's further away and the father's more distant still, while with a final refulgent effort, letters of fire rose high above all, notifying the

“Dangan” eviction. That mysterious, wonderful light now vanished, and the long corridor looked its normal self, but on the floor lay Arkwright insensible, when, turning to leave with his captors, O’Grady quietly observed,—

“Where did Mrs. Doyle die?”

“In that bed,” pointing to the one wherein the agent had lain.

“Is her husband alive?”

“No, sir.”

“When did he die?”

“Some months ago.”

“Where?”

“In that bed also!”

CHAPTER XVIII.

“WHY wait until your father’s death?” inquired Fanny Chalmers, pleadingly looking into those averted eyes of Dorrington Darecourt.

“My dear,” he answered, “that event cannot long be delayed.”

“Then this is doubly a reason why our marriage should not be postponed,” she urged.

“But would it not be wise to guard against the possibility of his objecting?” was counselled.

“What care I for any but you, my Lord Darecourt,” accompanying the last words with a deep courtesy; the speaker laughingly continued, “I must rehearse the rôle of ‘your ladyship’ at my leisure.”

“There will be no need, Fanny ; you have but to comport yourself naturally. Many nobly born are often not half so good as some of their less fortunate fellow-creatures, and the former ought to make way for those whom nature, not accident, decreed for the position.”

“But, Vincent dear, you would not retire from your birthright in favour of any cousin or other relative who might present himself in the future. Oh, the mere idea makes me tremble,” and she manifested symptoms of syncope.

“Fear nothing on that score, Fanny ; but really until within a very recent period I hardly thought of my future position.”

His companion opened wide her eyes, laughing merrily.

“The idea,” she went on, “of not thinking of the day when people will say ‘my lady’—I—I”—confusedly “meant ‘my lord,’ with carriages, servants, horses,

a box at the theatre, and all the other et-ceteras I have read of; why I could never rest until I were in the enjoyment of the splendid position in all its plenitude;" then she languishingly pleaded, "dear, dear Vincent, say, love, we will be married without delay, that people can call me 'your ladyship,' now, although it may not be strictly accurate; then when your father dies I will be no novice in the character of Lady Darecourt."

"Dismiss any concern on that point, Fanny. I will play the Mentor when the occasion arises; but, dearest girl, do not force me to break the news to my governor yet, and I equally hope your parent is not aware of our engagement."

"I——"

"You know of the promise not to speak to any one about our betrothal," he interrupted.

"But," she said peevishly, "although I have not broken my word, nor shall I,

what do I want of your father or mine ? All that I seek is to be your wife, dearest Vincent, not to linger longer in uncertainty," and she gazed archly into his face.

"What a wild, wilful girl," he exclaimed, with a tone of real admiration, "but one cannot expect to have their own way in everything. You must endure our engagement a little longer, until I either secure Lord Darecourt's consent to the marriage, or he dies and I succeed him in the title and property."

"But he has no power or control over either,—has he, Vincent ? Do ease my alarm."

Her companion merely replied,—

"Fanny, you must be aware of the value of his good wishes."

The cogency of this remark was unanswerable, and she relapsed into silence. It was manifest that Miss Chalmers had greedily swallowed the bait skilfully cast

by Brien Flynn, fully believing his companion Dorrington to be Vincent, heir of Darecourt, and that her whole energetic mind was directed to the accomplishment of the one darling object, how to become "Your ladyship;" while he, to do him justice, wished to postpone their nuptials in order to shield her from any unforeseen disappointment in his perilous game. Dorrington was attached to Fanny; but love in its purity, which misfortune only makes the more closely dear, was a stranger to both, although he was the weaker of the two, and she revelled in this discovery.

The latter caused her to assume a pronounced manner towards him, which had the reverse effect to that intended, and but that Flynn constantly paraded her power to aid their common cause, Dorrington would have grown cold or mayhap wholly indifferent; as it was, he resolved not to marry until the game of speculation for depriving his cousin Vincent of the title

and estates was brought to a successful issue, then he might wed.

The falling of night spoke the hour for separation, and Dorrington escorted Fanny towards her father's home, being careful to part from her where none could see or know of their acquaintanceship.

Miss Chalmers reached her boudoir, feeding anew the flame of her implacable purpose to become the future Lady Darecourt, while the other party to this conjugal scheme walked quietly along towards the Castle, and into the agent's room, who was awaiting his arrival

“I suppose there wor the usual in-thirishtin’ evint to kape ye, Misther Dorrington?” said Flynn, with a knowing leer.

“Exactly, and I wish it were settled one way or other; Miss Chalmers seems resolved on doing what she pleases.”

“Well, sir, belayve me, av ye don’t

hould her an somehow, we'll looze a thrump card intirely."

"You weary me with this repeated laudation of her."

"Do as ye plaze, sir, av coorse. Still, the nearer we git home to our mark, the more I feel sartin av her value."

"Perhaps you are right, but I have news for you, Flynn."

"Thank ye, sir," said the agent, bowing.

"Yes, Miss Chalmers told me she had been to this Miss Neville, and that the latter is very anxious to do what is asked of her."

"Good," smiled Flynn; "that's a great sthroke in our favour, for I thought whin Miss Chalmers kep' away durin' her illness she'd never resayve her agin."

"She did though, and most cordially," observed the young man.

"Bravo!" exclaimed the agent, chuckling, and adding, "What did Miss Neville say about Misther Vincent's appearance?"

“ That she could not recollect his face in the least, being so agitated on the day she saved him.”

“ Bedad, that’s wonderful luck, anyhow, an’ yer ground is clear ; Miss Chalmers doesn’t know Misther Vincent, nor does Miss Neville ayther, so yehav’ it all yer own way, ha, ha ! ” and Flynn laughed heartily.

“ Come,” interrupted his visitor, “ let us proceed to sterner matters. Have you got the deeds yet ? ”

“ Throth, av coorse I did, Misther Dorrington, an’ there they are,” untying a parcel of discoloured, faded parchments, bearing heavy, old-fashioned seals and ribbons attached. He pushed them across the table towards his confederate, the latter saying,—

“ We will compare these with the originals.”

“ Which I can’t help ye much in,” observed the deputy, with a weary look. “ Av I cud only git through thim matthers

av readin' an' writin' as aizey as ye, Misther Dorrington, I'd be differint to what I am to-day."

Unheeding this encomium, Dorrington Darecourt was now intently immersed in the extensive legal scrolls set out before him, diligently tracing line after line throughout, until satisfied that the original and its masterly simulation were identical. Whereupon, rising, he paced the floor thoughtfully, while inquiring, "How did you secure these remarkably clever counterfeits?"

"Well, ye see, Misther Dorrington, me nephey—(son av me dead sisther)—as liv's in Kevin Street, bein' brought up to the law an' a fine scholard, I tould him what I wantid, an' what I'd giv' to hav' id don', an' now this is the result. Av coorse, sir, I only gev him a bit to work an ayeche time, so he niver had the whole av the papers at wanst. Whin ye are satisfied they'll do, I'll pay his passage to Amerikey,

lavin' him to make his own way in the world."

"Very sensible indeed, Flynn, than which nothing could be better. By all means treat him liberally and send him off without delay."

"It shall be as ye say to-morrow, sir, at the laytist, av the packet goes; though they don't often sail from the Pidgeon house—howsomever, I'll thry——"

"Now to classify and put these away," said Dorrington, arranging the documents on the table.

"Here is the marriage settlement made on the late Lady Darecourt, dated and witnessed.

"This is the last will and testament of Lord Darecourt, disinheriting his son Vincent in favour of his nephew Dorrington, who succeeds him in the title and all in the present or future appertaining thereto, relying upon the Government to support and maintain the aforesaid nephew against the

machinations of the previously mentioned Vincent, the latter having forfeited all claim to the protection of his country, etc., etc.

“Bravo!” exclaimed the young man, exultingly, “this game is now reduced to a dead certainty, and the sooner my respected uncle vacates his place in this world the better pleased will be his very respectful nephew and heir, Dorrington Darecourt, gentleman, and Brien Flynn, his agent.”

“Yis, sir, that’s jist id; bud let us be afther puttin’ everythin’ in ids proper corner; now is a good time while yer uncle takes his usual shleep.”

“Very practical advice,” was answered. “Lead the way, and I will help you to stow these parchments in their customary receptacles until required for the *finale* in our great enterprise.”

Gliding into the adjoining room, they noiselessly went forward, reaching a door in the wall, which opened as the deputy pushed back the spring, revealing a multi-

tude of antiquated miscellanea, bracketed and numbered with scrupulous care. Unhesitatingly Flynn placed the short ladder he carried against the wall and mounted it.

“There, sir,” said he, under his breath, pointing, “is where I tuck the rayl dockie-mints from; hand up the copies, an’ I’ll put thim in their sthead.”

“No,” replied his companion firmly, “it is better that I should place them where they can most readily be found when wanted. Step down, Flynn; I will take your station.”

Distraught with rage, the agent, shielding his livid face from his confederate’s view, descended the ladder, and commenced handing up the spurious skins, Dorrington marking each one privately ere depositing them. However, with surprising celerity, Flynn had produced a second set of counterfeits, which he rapidly substituted for the originals left on the table by his partner, putting the former deftly aside. The

housing of the parchment being complete, the occupant of the ladder came down, and taking possession of what he supposed were the genuine deeds, went out lazily, saying,—

“Good-night, Flynn, close up these recesses; when next they are opened it will be to acclaim me lord of Darecourt; good-night.”

“Yis,” muttered the deputy, looking after him, “provided ye don’t thry to git me undher yer thumb; whin ye do, I’ll sind ye down deep to the flames av perdishun idself. Ye’ve got the rayl wans, hav’ ye? —ha, ha, ha!—I’ve got thim, an’ I mayne to sthick to thim till the money’s mine.”

Brien Flynn, turning to leave the apartment, suddenly beheld the form of Vincent Darecourt standing in the open doorway with his full eyes fixed upon him. “Great Heaven!” gasped the agent, tottering helplessly backward.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ I do not understand you, that is, I hardly know what to say, it is so unexpected, so unthought of.”

Vincent Darecourt, still uncovered, with a face calm, though the muscles of his mouth were somewhat undecided, proceeded,—

“ Miss Neville, will you take back the life you gave ? ” After a slight pause, he resumed, “ Pardon my impetuosity, I have merged every consideration in that grave inestimable one, whereof you are the sole arbiter, and here I wait the verdict for which I have expressly returned to Ireland, unknown to all but you.”

“ Mr. Darecourt,” she answered firmly,

“your knowledge of me is not sufficient to——”

“Miss Neville,” he interrupted hastily, bowing low, “spare yourself the effort of telling me that my Utopian dream is impossible. It must be so, but while life be allotted to me I will seek in unknown lands the peace I have for ever lost in Ireland.”

She looked with interest towards the speaker, for was he not of Eustace Dillon’s temperament?

“From boyhood,” was continued, “I have known no parental affection, my beloved mother gone to another world, my father chilling me by the coldness of death.”

“I, too, am an orphan, Mr. Darecourt,” hurriedly escaped her.

“Then,” he replied, “you can realize my superficial life among strangers. Yet even this was comparatively happy until I came here, where, through you, I live to regret existence.”

“ I am grieved if unconsciously I have darkened your path.”

“ It is but too true; yet even this brief expression of concern is worth more than the world else could offer.” Adding with acerbity, “ Alas, how hollow is life ! ”

“ Was this the friend who had played false to Eustace ? ” thought Lucy ; saying aloud, “ I fear, Mr. Darecourt, you will not stoop to understand others, in this way misinterpreting them as well as yourself.”

“ Would it were so,” he responded in a low tone ; “ but no, no, it is useless longer to contend with the phantom of happiness, the dream is past ; when I have seen my callous father for the last time, I shall turn my back on all I once prized and visit Ireland no more.”

“ But pardon me, do you not owe a duty to your inheritance and to those whom it concerns ? ”

“The instant Darecourt descends to me I shall sell it,” he answered vehemently.

“Yet,” she looked fixedly at him, “I have heard quite the reverse from my dear friend Eustace Dillon.”

“Eustace Dillon ! may I never hear his name again ! ”

Lucy Neville felt she was now mistress of the position ; saying with easy confidence,—

“Mr. Darecourt, will you think me bold if I suggest the wisdom of covering your head, and indulging in a rest on one of those rude rocks, known to me from infancy, but which to you——”

“Can never be forgotten,” he observed, with a warmth of emphasis causing her to lower her eyes, while he seated himself—somewhat nearer than the precise spot indicated.

“I was going to suggest that perhaps you arrive at conclusions rather hastily.”

“ In one remarkable instance I certainly must have done so.”

“ That is ? ”

“ Yourself, Miss Neville,” spoken with such *naïveté*, that even the resolute Lucy had to laugh lightly, observing,—

“ I will be more guarded the next time I put a personal question to so far-seeing a gentleman.”

“ And I,” energetically, “ shall not ask you again.”

Tempted beyond her usual restraint, Lucy could not avoid exclaiming,—

“ The world is large, Mr. Darecourt.”

“ Eternity transcends this world, yet you kept me from it.”

The ensuing pause was broken by the gentle maiden inquiring,—

“ Why have you not written to Eustace Dillon since you last went away ? ”

“ I did frequently.”

“ He has not received your letters.”

“ Impossible ; I hold his impertinent

reply, declining to correspond with me, ay, and on your account, Miss Neville."

"Which he did not write," she composedly rejoined; "but again, may I ask, no, no, I cannot bring myself to do so. Pray overlook my folly, Mr. Darecourt."

The latter eagerly said,—

"I would much prefer you to proceed if in any way it will elucidate the mystery attending Mr. Dillon, once my trusted and best friend."

These words moved Lucy to emotion. Stretching forth her hand, which he gently took, she said,—

"Oh! he has long been dear to me even as a brother, and I have been greatly pained to witness his sorrow at your neglect of him."

"My neglect! I pledge you my sacred word of honour, I have had no acknowledgment of my several communications to him except the offensive epistle just alluded to, arousing my deep resentment."

His observer grew confident.

“The question I would have put to you, Mr. Darecourt, is this, Do you write to any one in this neighbourhood ? ”

“To none in Ireland,” was rapidly replied, “excepting my father, who by the way never answers me.”

“Not even to Miss——” hesitating, to Fanny Chalmers ? ”

“I never heard the name before,” he peremptorily avowed, while the fugitive colour returned to Lucy’s face.

“Then rest thoroughly assured there is a conspiracy on foot inimical to your interests, and that an estrangement between both you and poor Eustace Dillon is sought for by some one or more persons.”

“I beseech you explain this thoroughly, Miss Neville ; do your suspicions revert to any particular source ? ”

“None ! although Eustace and myself

exchanged ideas upon it, leading, however, to no definite results. To begin with," she added, "you and he were prevented calling at Nevillstown during my illness."

"I but too well remember it," he exclaimed.

"By a supposed assistant of my medical attendant; then you wrote to me, Mr. Darecourt?"

"I did, and I never could account for your silence," was said hastily, yet inquiringly.

"For the obvious reason," she continued, "that I knew nothing of either occurrence until Eustace told me of both this very day."

"This indeed is absolutely alarming, particularly so from the fact that to resort to such machinations implies the existence of some deep unusual motive, whereas there is not even one to whom I am an object of mere passing interest."

Their eyes gravitated towards each other with a mutual impulse, and after a somewhat embarrassing interval Lucy resumed in pleading accents,—

“ Mr. Darecourt, will you not please to see Eustace, and jointly concert measures to discover who are the delinquents, and what are the motives for a course fraught, I fear, with evil to one or both of you ? ”

“ You seem positively apprehensive, Miss Neville.”

“ Yes, I own to it,” was answered energetically ; “ else why this daring fraud ? ”

“ Your conjecture must be well founded,” he observed ; “ but I cannot bring myself to attach the same importance to it that you do, as I discern no motive in it.”

“ Mr. Darecourt, I will not seek to influence you, though it is impossible to divest myself of the feeling that it intimately concerns your future.”

“Alas, Miss Neville, in a foreign land, severed from all I formerly knew, and the only being I could ever love—what will the strivings or plottings of others signify to me? Let life ring out its varying theme of joy or sorrow, I have but one ambition, one purpose, to hide myself in solitude.”

Lucy looked sadly on the sleepy, lethargic waves, while the speaker noiselessly rose from the rough seat, and approaching closer, watched her pensive musings.

At length, with a deep sigh she buried her face in her hands.

“I hope, brave girl,” entreated a soft mellow voice in her ear, “I am not the cause of your sorrowful reflection?”

“Yes, Mr. Darecourt, you are indeed,” fixedly regarding him; “had we never met you would have excelled in your sunny, coveted sphere without the untimely thought of pursuing an inane future, lost

to yourself and to others, while I, in my secluded rustic home, would have preserved a contented girlhood not undermined by the reflection now presenting itself that I have contributed to your misanthropy."

"Miss Neville, do you with your visible powers of reflection ascribe our tragic meeting to mere chance, or wonder that it has possessed my whole thoughts until in one broad stream of pure, unselfish love and gratitude they overflow their normal limits, gently exhausting themselves at your feet?"

"Mr. Darecourt, you cannot imagine how your words agitate me, depriving me of the power to realize our positions as they are and that which you would make of them."

"By the sweetest memories of childhood, by the recollections of my mother's home, since when, alas, a shallow fashionable world has given me protection: yea, by all that is in the power of man to

feel, I tell you, Lucy, that the being whom you succoured from the waves had better never have had an existence than that he should be doomed to languish without you while life shall last.

“Heed me, dear girl,” he added, “I speak not the frenzy of mere sentiment, nor unreal passion fading with time ; ah, no, I plead with the calm assurance of devotion that neither years nor circumstances dare mitigate or alter.”

“Oh, Mr. Darecourt !” she exclaimed in distressed accents, doubly harmonious in their plaintive cadences, “I will not, I could not doubt your sincerity ; but give me time to awaken to myself, to think why you honour me with an avowal as eloquent in expression as it is undeserved by me.”

“What ! undeserved, nay, say justly : even in proportion as my future proves happy and of benefit to others, so will the worth of thy daring valour become augmented. Speak, then, but one syllable to

allay my doubt. Ah ! ” he fervently went on, “ what miracles have not been wrought of that slender word hope ! the sulky monster, Despair, flying vanquished before its inspiring influence when all seemed lost ! Breathe but the semblance of its elastic spirit to me and my joy shall be replete ! ”

Putting up her two hands he clasped them with tender avidity, assisting her to rise from that rocky couch, when, with a resolute face and voice impressive in its solid bell-like tone, she said,—

“ Vincent Darecourt, you can never wish me to think more deeply——” hesitating, “ I mean more fondly of you than I do at this moment.”

Transported with joy he would have pressed her to his bosom ; but, holding up her finger, she calmly motioned towards home, and in silence they retraced their steps. A sparkling deep fount of bright crystal joy came bubbling

up between them, invading their heart of hearts, where the imperishable records of a first love were closely and rapturously enshrined.

They continued their walk in tranquil communion, silent from the very conviction of that requited affection, heedless of all but its one absorbing impulse.

When almost at the extremity of the sands, near to Nevillstown, a hard, saturnine laugh caused both to look forward, where, coming towards them, Lucy Neville recognized Fanny Chalmers and a strange gentleman.

These four persons, destined in the near future to play so important a part in the respective careers of each other, met and passed onwards unnoticed, Fanny only wishing to know from her companion "Who the strange man was who went by."

Dorrington Darecourt replied, "I never saw him before."

That night Lucy Neville lay upon her pillow, exhausted by the exciting events of the day, when turning restlessly towards the casement she beheld to her dismay those omens of ill to her race—the black gulls.

CHAPTER XX.

THE capture of the renowned rebel O'Grady was indeed a triumph, the importance of which could hardly be over-estimated, and notwithstanding every exertion of the authorities to the contrary the report of the disaster reached his comrades in arms in time, permitting of their escape before the soldiers despatched against them could reach the belligerent camp.

The patriots, of course, cursed their evil star, while in official circles there was great jubilation and triumph, the hero with the latter element being Robert Arkwright, and even lordly was he *fêted* on his exploit in crushing the traitor.

There were not many who heard of that

remarkable mystic transparency witnessed in Marcer's Hospital, or that Arkwright displayed abject terror on seeing it, finally becoming insensible ; but even these few soon regarded it as apocryphal and unworthy of credence.

The capture was speedily followed by the appointment and opening of the Commission to try O'Grady, the Government being represented by a very powerful bar, while no stone was left unturned to impanel a jury who would do their work fearlessly, and, it might be, dispassionately ; but a verdict of " Guilty " was necessary, and, as a matter of course, it must be forthcoming.

At last the eventful day broke for the trial, the accused, looking at the faint sunshine upon the opposite wall, thought, " What right had the patriot rebel to the smile of Heaven ? " By upraising his arms he could have felled to the ground these men pinioning him as easily as he was

known in bygone days to place a twelve-foot plank on the level and, by a standing jump, to clear it from end to end; but he submitted with a haughty reserve, simply saying, to reassure these functionaries of the law,—

“Proceed with your office. Do your duty. I am ready.”

The stalwart prisoner now stepped into the criminal’s dock, regarding with a determined air of lofty defiance all before him, including the judge, counsel, jury, and other officials incidental to the court.

“What impertinence is in the fellow’s look,” exclaimed one hot-headed, well-known Government partisan.

“Av he’d lind ye a thrifle av his lucks for yer shnuff-coloured muscle, yer wife id be much obleeged to him, or I’m mistaken,” was swiftly retorted.

“Arrah, don’t be afther annoyin’ the gentleman. How cud he keep a wife whin he can’t keep a civil tongue?” suggested a *confrère* of the late speaker.

The irascible aristocrat now muttered something inaudible, but evidently of a passionate nature.

“Is he conthradictin’ himsel’ agin?” was volunteered by another of the disputants.

“No, the gintleman sez yer wrong, ‘tis his wife keeps him.”

“Bad luck to me, that accounts for his eyes bein’ darned wid red thread” (alluding to obvious blotches around the eyelids).

These and other kindred colloquial items formed a pastime until the Attorney-General rose in his place and began a narration of facts against the arraigned.

Dispassionate hitherto, the prosecuting counsel reached the peroration, and then his speech revealed such a broad leaven of intolerant bigotry that many of those on his side, including the Judge, regretted it as calculated to embitter public feeling rather than to allay it. When the Rt. Hon.

gentleman resumed his seat there stole up a faint buzz of approval, which was instantly annihilated by the storm of indignant hisses spontaneously yelled at him.

It was only by a supreme effort O'Grady maintained his temper, especially when characterized by the first law-officer of the Crown as the "renegade" and "out-cast," abhorred of honest men, associate of "thieves," "scoundrels," etc., etc. Documentary evidence incriminating the prisoner speedily followed, then the few witnesses were easily got through, and at last the well-known Robert Arkwright, agent of the wealthy English baronet, Sir Mervyn Mervyn, was paraded, lighting anew the flame of general interest.

A very showy examination was that of the deputy by the senior counsel, at the close whereof the former speedily descended from the witness-table, while the rebel chief was observed to move forward, and bowing to the Judge, calmly said,—

“I demand the right to cross-examine the last witness.”

His lordship nodded affirmatively, accompanied by “Certainly, certainly.”

The middleman at once returned to the table, when the prisoner began to interrogate him :—

“Have you told the court all you know about me ? ”

“Yes.”

“Concealing nothing ? ”

“Nothing.”

“Good or bad ? ”

“I know nothing good of you,” laughing, in which the Attorney-General joined.

“My Lord,” urged the accused with imperturbable gravity, “I have two requests to make—first, I wish you particularly to note that the witness swears he knows nothing good of me——”

“That certainly is true,” iterated the agent.

"No interruption, please," enjoined his lordship. "Your first request I have noted, prisoner; what is your next?"

"My lord, the next is that the Attorney-General, who consorts with the witness—"

Judge.—"I cannot hear—"

"In laughter, I was going to add, my lord," O'Grady proceeded, "that the Attorney-General will not, and dare not, look me straight in the face."

Amid the commotion following this extraordinary statement, the Judge heatedly exclaimed, "I must clear the court if this unseemly state of things continue, I cannot allow the public time to be occupied unnecessarily. Is there anything else you wish to say, prisoner?"

"Has your lordship taken down my last request?"

"Well, really, I cannot see its application."

"You will by-and-by, my lord. I

repeat that the Attorney-General dare not look me in the face, much as he may indulge in splenetic, unfounded vilification shielded by the law."

The Judge waved his hand imperiously, "Go down, witness," whereupon Arkwright instantly disappeared, his lordship continuing, "move back in the dock, prisoner."

"I respectfully refuse to do so until I cross-examine the last witness," said the traitor composedly, followed by great excitement.

"The witness has been sufficiently long on the table for you to have examined him had you been so minded."

"I would have done so if your lordship had recorded my second request, which I will hereafter prove to be fair and well-founded in law."

"You must not lay down the law, sir."

"Nor can you, my lord, limit the powers of defence, which that same law

confers upon every person in my position."

"Go back, sir," was the mandate of the Judge, whereupon O'Grady turned to the jury, observing,—

"I scorn your mercy, but I demand justice."

"Officers," his lordship peremptorily ordered, "secure the prisoner."

With a spring the latter tossed the first official out of his path, getting wedge-like into an angle of the dock as he exclaimed, "Move at your peril, no tyranny shall restrain me from my lawful means of defence: I defy you all."

The jailors faced him, but seemed unwilling to attempt more, and, indeed, well they might, for with those two ponderous arms raised to his immense chest, they full well knew he could have felled a bullock by a single blow.

The public sprang upon the benches and every available prominence, the excitement

fast boiling up to fever-heat, when, amid the increasing tumult, one of the oldest of the jury got up, saying in a tremulous tone,—

“ My lord, it might be as well to recall the late witness, and allow the prisoner to examine him.”

“ Yes, if he attempts no further violence,” responded the law-giver, inwardly glad to end the commotion.

“ I shall adhere to my full legal rights, and nothing less.”

“ And I will carefully guard against their transgression,” answered his lordship, adding, “ Call back the witness.” Whereupon O’Grady said courteously, “ Thank you, sir,” to the juryman who had interfered.

“ Prisoner, address me in future,” roared the aged official irately.

“ To cross-examine the witness and address the Judge is what I cannot do at the same time ; therefore I shall attempt the former only,” observed the accused in a

jocose voice, as he turned to Arkwright,—
 “Now, sir, answer on your oath. Did I ever aid you in any way?”

“I submit that this is not relevant to the issue,” interposed the Attorney-General.

“As I do not see the face of the objector I will not answer him; but I maintain, my lord, that whereas the agent for Sir Mervyn Mervyn swears I never did him a service, and as I can establish beyond doubt that I saved his life,”—
 excitement,—“will it not prove that his oath is worthless by my doing so?”

Arkwright revealed alternately every colour and shade in the rainbow during this statement.

The Judge responded, “What you have said appears to me but fair; therefore you may proceed with your questions without fear of interruption.”

“You maintain that I never rendered you a service?” continued the rebel.

“Never,” was answered firmly.

“Nor befriended you in any way ?”—
“No.”

“On your oath, Robert Arkwright, did I not rescue you when bound to a post to be shot ?”—“You did not.”

“On your oath ?”—“On my oath.”

“On the Bull Wall ?”—“No.”

“The night before you decoyed me to Marcer’s Hospital ?”—“No.”

“Nor you never told this to anyone ?”—
—“Never.”

“That you swear ?”—“I do.”

“And if any one says so it is untrue ?”—
—“It is untrue,”

“My lord, may I ask that the officials from Marcer’s Hospital be called ?”

“Certainly, they are present,” answered the Judge.

“Are any of the soldiers here who took part in my arrest ?”

‘Yes, all of them.”

“Then I also claim the right to call them.”

These several witnesses individually and collectively testified to that night's eventful circumstances, the fiery simulation of the Dangan eviction, the subsequent horror of the agent, and his acknowledgment of having been saved by the prisoner on the previous night when tied to a stake to be shot.

A tumult of agitated feeling now pervaded the court, even those against the accused wondering at the conduct of the deputy and the mystic unaccountable appearance in the hospital ward.

This, however, came to an end, when O'Grady observed,—

“ With your lordship's permission I will address a few brief words to the Court, when you can close this trial in the way it was predestined from the beginning, for I well know my doom.”

Every one anticipated a fierce, fiery harangue, for which the patriot was notorious, but to their chagrin he quietly said,—

“ When called upon to plead to the indictment, I said I was not guilty, though, from your point of view, I must be wrong, whereas from mine I know I am right, the logical consideration now being, what is your platform, what is mine ? By numbers you conquered Ireland, but never did or can subdue her. By force you maintain a resolve to hold her prostrated, and all the blood and money necessary to achieve this sacrilegious end would not be considered shed in vain. Is this right ? My contention is, that nothing can justify wrong. You have no claim upon us while we have the memory of persecution and our dispossessed fathers, whose blood will still cry heavenwards until justice, if not retribution, is decreed in the extermination of the Saxons, as they have proved themselves on our desecrated soil. Fulminate your sentence against me, my lord. I have no greater ambition than to die fearlessly in the noble cause wherein I have humbly

served the emancipation of my native land ; ” suddenly adding, as if by impulse, “ My lord, may I have the Hon. William Hawkes called ? ”

“ What, my son ? ” inquired the Judge.

“ The same, my lord.”

“ He is here, but I cannot understand your motive.”

While this witness was being sworn the leading prosecutor sank upon his seat, where, with drooped head and locked arms, he remained motionless.

“ Were you not a student in Trinity College ? ” — “ Yes.”

“ We graduated together, did we not ? ”

“ We did.”

“ I may flatter myself by saying we were then intimate friends ? ”

“ Yes, we were very intimate friends.”

“ You are an Englishman ? ”

“ I am.”

“ Yet you are not ashamed to avow this intimacy ? ”

“I cannot refrain from truth, and, although we have not met for years, I still hold the same conviction, that I can never know or expect to find a nobler, honester, more large-hearted man than my former friend, Michael O’Grady.”

There was much amazement in the court at this declaration, and, for the first time throughout the case, the prisoner was visibly affected; however, he comported himself firmly, although his voice apparently faltered, as he responded,—

“Thank you for those kind words here, and when least expected:” continuing, “Now I come to a serious question. Mr. Hawkes, did you at any time while in College complain of various articles of property having been pillaged from you?”—
“Yes.”

“Did others complain?”—“Many.”

“Often?”—“Several times.”

“Did you one day show me my stolen watch?”—“Yes.”

“ Hid in a recess near the Provost’s house ? ”—“ Yes.”

“ Did we together lie in ambush waiting for the thief ? ”—“ We did.”

“ Did we succeed in detecting him ? ”

“ Yes, we captured him when passing the porter’s lodge with the watch.”

“ What did I do ? ”

“ You knocked him down with a single blow.”

“ What else ? ”

“ The blow broke his jawbone.”

“ True: was he afterwards expelled the University ? ”—“ Yes.”

“ Have you ever seen this estimable person since ? ”—“ I have.”

“ Do you see him now ? ”—“ I do.”

“ On your solemn oath, is not the so-called Right Hon. gentleman, the Attorney-General for Ireland, that outcast of Trinity College ? ”

“ He is.”

“ And the disfigurement of his face,

wherefore he could not look at me, was caused by my hand?"

"Yes, undoubtedly."

Amid the greatest excitement all eyes are now concentrated on the bent, immovable figure of the first law officer of the Crown; but a deeper consternation was yet in store, when the Solicitor-General, approaching his leader, violently proclaimed,—“My lord, the Attorney-General is dead!”

It were fruitless to attempt a description of the commotion attending this appalling discovery, notwithstanding which, an hour later, Michael O'Grady was sentenced to suffer the extreme penalty of the law.



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